

剑桥政治思想史原著系列（影印本）

CAMBRIDGE TEXTS IN THE HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

上帝之城

The City of God against the Pagans

Augustine

奥古斯丁

Edited by

R. W. DYSON

中国政法大学出版社

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Series editors

RAYMOND GEUSS

Reader in Philosophy, University of Cambridge

QUENTIN SKINNER

Regius Professor of Modern History in the University of Cambridge

Augustine: The City of God against the Pagans

This is the first new rendition for a generation of *The City of God*, the first major intellectual achievement of Latin Christianity and one of the classic texts of Western civilisation. When he began to write *The City of God* in 413, St Augustine's intention was to defend the Christian Church against the charge of having brought about the Sack of Rome in 410. Outgrowing this initial purpose, the work evolved into a detailed critique of the political and moral tradition of Rome and a synthesis of Platonism and Christianity which must stand as one of the most significant achievements in Western intellectual history. Apart from its intrinsic interest, the Christian account of social and political relations which Augustine gives was to furnish one of the most fertile sources of material for the controversial literature in the Middle Ages. R. W. Dyson has produced a complete, accurate, authoritative and fluent translation of *The City of God*, edited together with full biographical notes, a concise introduction, bibliographical note and chronology of Augustine's life. The result is one of the most important single contributions to the Cambridge Texts series yet published, of interest to students of ecclesiastical history, the history of political thought, theology, philosophy and late antiquity.

R. W. DYSON is Lecturer in Politics at the University of Durham.

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EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY

R. W. DYSON

Lecturer in Politics, University of Durham

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AUGUSTINE
The City of God against the Pagans

剑桥政治思想史原著系列

丛书编辑

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在政治理论领域，“剑桥政治思想史原著系列”作为主要的学生教科丛书，如今已牢固确立了其地位。本丛书旨在使学生能够获得从古希腊到 20 世纪初期西方政治思想史方面所有最为重要的原著。它囊括了所有著名的经典原著，但与此同时，它又扩展了传统的评价尺度，以便能够纳入范围广泛、不那么出名的作品。而在此之前，这些作品中有许多从未有过现代英文版本可资利用。只要可能，所选原著都会以完整而不删节的形式出版，其中的译作则是专门为本丛书的目的而安排。每一本书都有一个评论性的导言，加上历史年表、生平梗概、进一步阅读指南，以及必要的词汇表和原文注解。本丛书的最终目的是，为西方政治思想的整个发展脉络提供一个清晰的轮廓。

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Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought is now firmly established as the major student textbook series in political theory. It aims to make available to students all the most important texts in the history of Western political thought, from ancient Greece to the early twentieth century. All the familiar classic texts will be included but the series seeks at the same time to enlarge the conventional canon by incorporating an extensive range of less well-known works, many of them never before available in a modern English edition. Wherever possible, texts are published in complete and unabridged form, and translations are specially commissioned for the series. Each volume contains a critical introduction together with chronologies, biographical sketches, a guide to further reading and any necessary glossaries and textual apparatus. When completed, the series will aim to offer an outline of the entire evolution of Western political thought.

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In memory of
Matthew John Purvis
1986–1993

Preface

This translation has been made from the critical edition of B. Dombart and A. Kalb, published in the *Corpus Christianorum* series (2 vols., Turnhout, 1955). Despite numerous – and inevitable – misprints, this is the best available edition. I have also from time to time consulted the *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* edition of E. Hoffmann (2 vols., Vienna, 1899–1900). In view of the great length of the text, and in keeping with the general principles of the series of which this translation is a part, footnotes have been kept to a minimum. For very extensive annotation, the reader is referred to the edition of J. E. C. Welldon (see Bibliographical Note). No abbreviations have been used which are not standard or self-explanatory.

Introduction

St Augustine

Augustine was born at Thagaste in the Roman province of Africa on 13 November 354, to parents of senatorial rank. His mother, Monica, was a Christian; his father Patricius was not, although he was received into the Church shortly before his death. Augustine was brought up as a Christian catechumen; as was commonly the case in the fourth century, however, he was not baptised as a child. His childhood seems to have been full of unhappy experiences, especially in regard to his education;¹ but he writes of his mother with great affection, and is grieved by the memory of the pain which his youthful lapses caused her. In 370, he went to Carthage to study rhetoric. There, he lost touch with Christianity and acquired a mistress, who bore him a son called Adeodatus. As everyone knows, he regards himself as having lived a deplorable life as a young man, although he does not seem to have done much that we should now regard as very shocking. He read Cicero's dialogue called *Hortensius* (now lost), an exhortation to philosophy which fired his enthusiasm for learning; he was attracted successively to Manichaeism, Scepticism and Neoplatonism; he greatly admired the *Enneads* of Plotinus. Having taught for some years at Thagaste, Carthage and Rome, he accepted a position as municipal professor of rhetoric at Milan in

¹ One can only with sadness note his rhetorical question at Bk XXI, 14: 'If anyone were offered the choice of suffering death or becoming a child again, who would not recoil from the second alternative and choose to die?' Cf. *Confess.*, 1, 14.

384. At Milan, he came under the influence of St Ambrose the bishop, and two Christian friends, Simplicianus and Pontitianus. After much heart-searching, he was converted – perhaps one ought to say recalled – to Christianity, and baptised by St Ambrose in the summer of 386. Returning to Africa, he founded a small religious fraternity at Thagaste, was ordained priest in 391, and became bishop of Hippo in 395 (Hippo, or Hippo Regius, is modern Annaba in Algeria; in Augustine's day it was a flourishing seaport, second in importance only to Carthage). In addition to his pastoral duties, Augustine was for the rest of his life engaged in controversy with the various heretics and schismatics who then troubled the Church: he produced treatises against the Manichaeans, Arians, Pelagians and Donatists. He died at Hippo in 430, while the city was being besieged by the Vandals. His feast is celebrated on the day of his death, 28 August. His literary output, excluding all *dubia* and *spuria*, extends to 113 books and treatises, more than two hundred letters and over five hundred sermons.

The City of God

The *City of God* is universally regarded as Augustine's greatest work. He began it in 413 and worked at it sporadically over the next thirteen years, as his episcopal duties and other literary projects allowed, publishing it in fascicules along the way. (He tells us (v,26) that someone was preparing a reply to the first three books; but no such answer has survived, if it was ever written.) The completed work appeared in 426.

On Augustine's own account (*Retractationes*, 2,43,2), it was after the sack of Rome, in 410, by Alaric and the Visigoths, that he resolved to write the *City of God*, in rebuttal of those who then 'began to blaspheme against the true God more ferociously and bitterly than before'. Rome does not, in fact, seem to have suffered much damage during Alaric's three-day sack; and, as Augustine is at pains to point out, her attackers – who were Christians, albeit Arians – were remarkably restrained in their treatment of the populace (see, e.g., 1,1ff). But the Romans had become accustomed to thinking of their city and empire as eternal. As one might expect, the psychological impact of the sack was considerable. And only twenty-six years previously, by his edict *Cunctos populos* of 384, the

emperor Theodosius I had abolished the worship of Rome's ancient gods and established Christianity as the official religion of the empire. Numerous anti-pagan edicts had followed. Not surprisingly, a certain current of (largely aristocratic) opinion in the Roman world attributed the events of 410 to this change of allegiance. Rome is now suffering, it was thought, because she has forsaken the gods of her fathers in favour of a God Who counsels meekness and submission.

Augustine's original intention, then, was to answer the charge that Christianity was responsible for bringing about the sack of Rome. Those parts of the *City of God* (Bks I-X *passim*) which are largely devoted to this task are easy to summarise. Rome's misfortunes are not due to the coming of Christianity; she suffered numerous calamities and reversals before Christ was born. Her gods did not protect her then, and they have not protected her now, because they cannot protect her: they are futile nonentities. They are, moreover, evil demons who love to lead men into error. This is shown by the fact that they wish to be worshipped by means of obscene theatrical displays and other degrading performances. All attempts, even by authors as formidable as Varro,² to construct a respectable theology out of the farrago of myth and superstition which constitutes popular religion end only in contradiction and nonsense.

But the *City of God* rapidly acquired a broader purpose than this original one. In 412 – presumably while he was planning the *City of God* according to his initial conception of it – Augustine received a letter from a friend and fellow Christian called Marcellinus. Marcellinus was a Roman civil servant, deputed by the emperor to the delicate and thankless task of trying to resolve the dispute between the Catholics and the Donatists. In his letter, he set out certain difficulties which he had come across during his discussions with educated pagans, and, in particular, with Volusianus, the imperial proconsul of Africa. Why are the miracles of Christianity regarded as anything special? Paganism has many miracles to boast of, some of them more spectacular than the miracles of Christ. If God was pleased with the sacrifices offered to Him by the people of the Old Testament, and if He is immutable, why is He not pleased with

² Augustine's analysis of the moral, religious, military and political culture of Rome embodies some very significant echoes and fragments of Marcus Varro's *Antiquitates* and other writings which are now lost or fragmentary. Most of his encyclopaedic knowledge of Roman religion seems to come from Varro.

such sacrifices now? What good has Christianity brought to Rome? Is it not true that, ever since the old religion was abandoned and Christianity taken up, the political and military fortunes of the empire have gone from bad to worse? Augustine gives a provisional answer to these difficulties in two letters (*Epist.* 137 and 138), in which he sketches several of the themes later developed in the *City of God*. At the end of *Epist.* 138, he promises to deal with these matters more fully in a further letter or in a book. This is the promise referred to at Bk 1,1 of the *City of God*, and of which the *City of God* itself is the fulfilment.

We may notice in passing, however, that Augustine mentions the possibility of writing a book about the two 'cities' brought into being by the fall of the angels in his *De genesi ad litteram* (11,15,20), written between 402 and 413. Also, as early as 405, in his work called *De catechizandis rudibus* (see 19,31–21,38) he speaks of 'two cities, one of the wicked, the other of the holy, which endure from the birth of the human race to the end of time'. It is reasonable to conjecture that a *City of God* in some form or other would have been written even had the sack of Rome not occurred, and even without the correspondence with Marcellinus.

In a letter written to an African Christian called Firmus, to whom he was sending a copy of the work, Augustine says:

There are twenty-two sections: too many to bring together into one volume. If you wish to make two volumes, you should divide them in such a way that there are ten books in the first and twelve in the second. If you wish to have more than two, you should make five volumes. Let the first contain the first five books, in which I write against those who claim that the worship of the gods – or, as I should rather say, of evil spirits – leads to happiness in this life. Let the second volume contain the next five books, written against those who think that such deities are to be worshipped by rites and sacrifices in order to secure happiness in the world to come. Let the three following volumes contain four books each: I have arranged this part of the work in such a way that four books describe the origin of that City, four its progress – or, rather, its development – and the final four the ends which await it.³

³ This letter was discovered by Dom C. Lambot and published by him in the *Revue bénédictine*, 51 (1939), pp. 109ff. For a useful amplification of this description see *St Augustine: Concerning The City of God against the Pagans*, trans. Henry Bettenson with an Introduction by John O'Meara (2nd edition, London, 1984), pp.

This division into sections of so highly discursive a work is inevitably rather inexact; but it is useful as a broad description. The chapter headings which appear in this translation may be by Augustine himself, although they are more probably the additions of subsequent editors.

Partly, no doubt, because of the episodic nature of its composition, but partly also thanks to Augustine's habitual peculiarities of style, the *City of God* is not an easy book to read. Augustine is addicted to long and involved sentences (sometimes he gets lost in them himself); he is much given to repetition, the pursuit of lengthy digressions, and to labouring a point; he is capable of great obscurity and tedium; some of his arguments are weak, tendentious and unfair. Peter Brown, one of Augustine's most distinguished modern biographers, gives a summary of the character of the work as a whole which the reader may think more charitable than it deserves.

Even Augustine thought it a bit too long; and we tend to dismiss it, as Henry James dismissed the Russian novels of the last century, as a 'loose, baggy monster'. Above all, *De Civitate Dei* is a book of controversy. It should never be treated as though it were a static, complete photograph of Augustine's thought. It reads like a film of a professional boxing championship: it is all movement, ducking and weaving. Augustine is a really stylish professional: he rarely relies on the knock-out; he is out to win the fight on points. It is a fight carried on in twenty-two books against nothing less than the whole pagan literary culture available to him.⁴

Nor, by the same token, is the *City of God* an easy book to translate. Some of Augustine's past translators have, it must be said, yielded to the temptation to 'improve' on the original, either in the interests of some religious preference of their own or in order to make difficult passages or arguments seem clearer. In translating the *City of God*, I have followed the straightforward principle that the only task of the translator is to translate. I have, in other words, tried to give as veracious a rendering of Augustine's Latin as possible, including

xxxvii–xxxviii. Augustine gives a shorter, but broadly similar, description at *Retract.*, 2,43,2. For partial descriptions in the *City of God* itself, see II,2; III,1; IV,1f; VI, Preface and Ch. 1; XI,1; XII,1; XVIII,1.

⁴ P. R. L. Brown, 'Saint Augustine', in Beryl Smalley (ed.), *Trends in Medieval Political Thought* (Oxford, 1965), p. 1.

his many awkwardnesses and obscurities. Where necessary, I have sacrificed elegance to accuracy, and I have not tried to mitigate the fact that some parts of what he says (particularly when engaged in scriptural commentary and interpretation) are difficult to make sense of. I have sometimes had to translate more freely than I should wish, simply in the interests of intelligibility. Where it has not been possible to give a literal translation, I have at any rate tried to convey the meaning and flavour of Augustine's text as faithfully as I could. If this translation contains difficulties, this is because those difficulties appear in the original. I have tried to remain as independent as possible of the previous translators whose versions I have consulted; although it goes without saying that I am greatly indebted to them.

Augustine's political thought

At first glance, it may seem to the reader odd that this enormous work, so full of biblical exegesis and defunct theological controversy, should excite the interest of historians of political thought to the extent that it does. Despite the apparent belief of some authors to the contrary, Augustine does not offer a 'theory' or 'philosophy' of history or politics. The *City of God* is not, and is not intended to be, a treatise, systematic or otherwise, of political thought. There is no discussion in it of the merits or demerits of the different forms of government; there is no sustained attempt to recommend an ideal, or a best possible, state. Here, as in Augustine's other mature writings, all else is auxiliary to his theological purpose. Insofar as the elements of Augustine's political, social and historical thought are represented in the *City of God*, they are present, if one may so express it, in much the way that the fragments of a pot might be present at an archaeological site. They have to be identified, sorted out from large masses of other material, and assembled. When this process is complete, however, the resultant picture is a relatively clear one: in its broad outlines, at any rate, though there is a good deal of room for disagreement and debate over matters of detail.⁵

⁵ The picture becomes a good deal more detailed and informative, of course, when the *City of God* is read in conjunction with the numerous other 'political' passages which are scattered throughout Augustine's works. Paolucci's anthology and the numerous quotations and references given by H. A. Deane may be consulted. See Bibliographical Note for details.

In the following paragraphs, I shall give as complete a summary as I can. The reader should bear in mind, though, that, for reasons of space, I shall have to prescind altogether from discussion of critical and interpretational difficulties.

Augustine's social and political thinking depends most fundamentally upon his understanding (mediated through St Paul) of the biblical narrative of the Fall. When God created Adam and Eve and placed them in Paradise, their life there was originally one of untrammelled joy.

The love of the pair for God and for one another was undisturbed, and they lived in a faithful and sincere fellowship which brought great gladness to them, for what they loved was always at hand for their enjoyment. There was a tranquil avoidance of sin; and, as long as this continued, no evil of any kind intruded, from any source, to bring them sadness. (XIV,10)

Our first parents were subject to one prohibition only: that they should not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Had they not sinned, their happy life would have continued for ever. They would have produced others of their own kind without the shame of lust or the pangs of childbirth; they would have known no sickness or misfortune; and men would have made the transition from earth to heaven without pain and death.

But man was created with free will. Made by God out of nothing, and therefore lacking the supreme perfection of being that only He possesses, it was possible for the first human beings to fall away from Him through sin: that is, through the free choice of wrongdoing (cf. XIV,13). The serpent, envious of man's unfallen state, beguiled Eve, and she led her husband into transgression with her. Their sin consisted in placing their own wishes before the ordinance of God: in allowing their actions to be directed by pride and self-love rather than by the love of God. Let no one think that hell is too severe a penalty for the original sin. The sin of the first human beings was all the more dreadful because so little had been asked of them: 'the unrighteousness of disobeying the command was all the greater in proportion to the ease with which it could have been observed and upheld' (XIV,12).

As their own punishment, Adam and Eve were immediately expelled from Paradise and made subject to pain, death and damnation. But, as well as their own punishment, their sin has conse-

quences for their offspring also: consequences which determine the whole subsequent course of human history. 'So great was the sin of those two that human nature was changed by it for the worse; and so bondage to sin and the necessity of death were transmitted to their posterity' (xiv,1). Because Adam and Eve abused it, the free will with which mankind was created has been lost: not by Adam and Eve merely, but by every single member of the human race whose first parents they are. 'The choice of the will, then, is truly free only when it is not the slave of vices and sins. God gave to the will such freedom, and, now that it has been lost through its own fault, it cannot be restored save by Him Who could bestow it' (xiv,11). Created to love God, man, by succumbing, in the person of his first parent, to self-love when he had a choice, has lost the capacity to choose; or, at least, he can now choose only in the sense of selecting which of the many available sins actually to commit. He has become so dominated by self-love that, unless he is aided by the unmerited gift of God's grace, it is now not possible for him to do anything except sin: that is, to live, as Augustine habitually puts it (e.g. xv,1), 'according to man' rather than 'according to God'.

Because of the original sin, then, each one of us comes into the world worthy of damnation: subject to 'the necessity of death'. This, to Augustine's mind, is the dominant fact of our individual and social existence. He does not really explain to us why or how the original sin has such consequences for all mankind, rather than merely for those who committed it; and he does not discuss the obvious difficulties which his view encounters. God's dispensation is hidden from us, but we are not entitled to question its fairness. It is, he considers, a matter of faith that the subsequent condition – moral, social and political – of mankind has been determined by the sin of our first parents.

It is not insignificant that the first city was founded by Cain, the fratricidal son of Adam (see, e.g., xv,1; 5). It is clearly Augustine's view that, had the Fall not occurred, the state, and the various devices of coercion, punishment and oppression which we associate with the state, would not have come into existence. They would not have come into existence simply because there would have been no need for them. Man is naturally sociable (see, e.g., xix,5; 12), but he is not naturally political. Living with a rightly ordered love, and

therefore a good will – loving God above all and neighbour as self – men would have been able to dwell with one another in spontaneous peace and co-operation (see, e.g., XIV,6f; 10). It was God's original intention that men were to be equal and ungoverned save by Him. They were given dominion over the beasts, but no man was given dominion over any other. 'He did not intend that His rational creature, made in His own image, should have lordship over any but irrational creatures: not man over man, but man over the beasts. Hence, the first just men were established as shepherds over flocks, rather than as kings of men' (XIX,15).

Fallen man, however, because governed by self-love, is constantly subject to destructive emotions and impulses. He is envious and vindictive; he loves glory; he desires material riches; he is consumed by what Augustine calls *libido dominandi*, the lust for mastery, the desire to dominate others. This desire, Augustine says elsewhere (*De doctrina Christiana*, I,23) arises out of an intolerable pride which refuses to accept that all men are by nature equal (and cf. *City of God* XIV,13). To a considerable extent, the state is an expression of these base impulses. It arose out of man's lust for power and violence; most of its wars occur because of these things (although Augustine does acknowledge the possibility of just warfare: see XIX,7); and it has always existed largely to acquire and preserve those things which man desires only because he is greedy and sinful. In this sense, the state is a consequence of sin and an occasion for sin. It is not, as for Plato and Aristotle, a natural part of human life or a natural expression of human capacities. On the contrary, it is for Augustine an unnatural supervention, brought into being by the fact that man's naturally sociable nature has been vitiated and made selfish by sin. Even at its best, the state is a source of fear, pain, and death. Even good judges, because they cannot know men's hearts, have to resort to torture in order to get at the truth; even they make mistakes, and sometimes condemn the innocent or let the guilty go free. The wise judge can only pray to be delivered from his responsibilities (see XIX,6).

The Fall of man did not, as it were, come as a surprise to God. God does not exist within, and is not bound by, time. He contemplates the whole of eternity in one single glance. Nothing is unknown to Him, therefore. Because nothing is 'future' or 'past' to God, nothing is unforeseen or forgotten by Him, and nothing can

take Him unawares (see XI,4ff; and cf. *Confess.*, 11,10,12ff). Thus, He knew from all eternity 'that man would sin and that, being thereby made subject to death himself, would propagate men doomed to die' (XII,23).⁶ In His mercy, however, He also resolved from all eternity to rescue some few men – only a few, Augustine thinks – from the general wreck: He has predestined some members of the human race to salvation in spite of sin. And these elect, these chosen ones, are members of what Augustine calls the City of God. They are those whose vitiated wills are repaired by God's grace: who are therefore able to escape the bondage of self-love, to love God as they should, and therefore to merit salvation. By contrast, those upon whom God has not chosen to bestow His grace are members of the earthly city, the *civitas terrena*. The *civitas terrena* is the city of the lost, whose allotted end is eternal damnation: sometimes Augustine calls it the *civitas diaboli*.

Augustine speaks of these two cities or communities as deriving their respective identities, their cohesion, from their members' allegiance to a common object of love. This idea of love as a unifying force is very characteristic of Augustine. In a general sense, he describes a *populus*, a 'people', not in terms of race or language, but as 'an assembled multitude of rational creatures bound together by a common agreement as to the objects of their love'; from which it follows, he says, that 'if we are to discover the character of any people, we have only to examine what it loves' (XIX,24). As to the two cities, he says: 'Certainly, this is the great difference that distinguishes the two cities of which we are speaking. The one is a fellowship of godly men, and the other of the ungodly; and each has its own angels belonging to it. In the one city, love of God has been given pride of place, and, in the other, love of self' (XIV,13). Somewhat later in the same book, Augustine says,

Two cities, then, have been created by two loves: that is, the earthly by love of self extending even to contempt of God, and the heavenly by love of God extending to contempt of self. The one, therefore, glories in itself, the other in the Lord; the one seeks glory from men, the other finds its highest glory in God,

⁶ Augustine is, however, very explicit in his insistence that man sinned of his own free will. In several places, and especially the long discussion at Bk V,9f, he insists that God's foreknowledge is not the *cause* of sin.

the Witness of our conscience. The one lifts up its head in its own glory; the other says to its God, 'Thou art my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.' (xiv, 28, quoting Psalm 3, 3)

It is important to be clear at this point, however, that Augustine's City of God, 'a fellowship of godly men', is not simply coextensive with, or a synonym for, the institutional or earthly Church. Certainly, Augustine's language is not without ambiguity here. Indeed, he is materially inconsistent in this regard, and a number of his medieval admirers, misunderstanding him – or perhaps they deliberately exploited his inconsistencies – were apt to treat *civitas Dei* and *civitas terrena* simply as alternative terms for the earthly embodiments of spiritual and secular power. Broadly speaking, however, Augustine's preferred meaning of the terms is not in doubt. The City of God is, as it were, a community which transcends space and time. The elect who are at present alive on earth form only a small part of its citizen body. It consists also of those angels who remained loyal to God and the souls of the elect who have died and are now in heaven with Him. Those members of the City of God who are at any time alive on earth Augustine refers to collectively as the *civitas Dei peregrina*, the City of God on pilgrimage. Augustine's City of God, we might say, is what is usually meant by the 'Communion of Saints'.

Similar remarks apply to the *civitas terrena*. It is very clearly exemplified in the great pagan states of antiquity: Babylon, Assyria, the pagan Roman Empire; but (again, despite fairly frequent ambiguities of language) it is not any one of these states, nor all of them taken together. Those of the lost or reprobate who are at present alive on earth form part of its membership; but it also includes the souls of the damned who have died and who are now suffering in hell; and its founder members, so to speak, are the apostate angels who, in their pride, fell away from God. The two cities are invisible communities whose duration is coextensive with the history of the world.

It should be noted also that many who might seem to be among the saved are not. Many people who are outwardly members of the institutional Church are, in fact, citizens of the earthly city.

[W]hile she is a pilgrim in this world, the City of God has with her, bound to her by the communion of the sacraments, some who will not be with her to share eternally in the bliss of the

saints. Some of these are concealed. Some of them, however, join openly with our enemies, and do not hesitate to murmur against the God Whose sacrament they bear. Sometimes they crowd into the theatres with our enemies, and sometimes into the churches with us. (I,35)

In this wicked world, and in these evil days . . . many reprobate are mingled in the Church with the good. Both are as it were collected in the net of the Gospel; and in this world, as in a sea, both swim together without separation, enclosed in the net until brought ashore. (xviii,49)

It is not correspondingly true, however, that every member of the City of God is also a member of the institutional Church (see xviii,47ff). The righteous men of the Old Testament, who lived before there was a Church in the narrow institutional sense, are members of the City of God. Augustine even suggests at one point (xviii,23) that the Erythraean or Cumaean Sibyl is a member, because she spoke out forcefully against the worship of false gods. So far as the earthly contingents of the two cities are concerned, we cannot tell by any outward appearance who belongs to which. For the time being, the two cities are mingled together in this world, sharing its resources and sharing its tribulations also; for God causes His rain to fall upon good and evil men alike (see, e.g., I,8). They will only be visibly divided at the end of history, when Christ will come to judge the living and the dead. Then, the sheep will be separated from the goats and the two cities will each go away to its appointed end: 'the end to which there shall be no end' (xxii,30).

Augustine's doctrine of the two cities is intimately associated with a Christian perception – it is not in any defensible sense a 'philosophy' – of history. Human history, properly conceived, is not the history of Livy, but the history of the Bible. It is not, as certain philosophers think, an endless repetition of the same cycle of creation and destruction; nor is it the history of the glorious exploits of Rome or of any other empire. It is the gradual unfolding of the respective destinies of the two cities, in a linear progression from the beginning of history to its end. History is not working towards some end or culmination in this world. The true destiny of mankind, whether it be damnation or salvation, does not lie within, but beyond, history.

For Augustine, then, membership of the state cannot have the ethical significance attributed to it by Plato and Aristotle. The state, that is, cannot be the matrix within which man, made wise by education and practice, can achieve his distinctive good or end by making rational choices and participating in the common life. Man's final good simply does not lie, and cannot be achieved, in this life. Moreover, it is only by the grace of God, given to some men by God simply as an undeserved gift, that man is enabled to live well even in a restricted sense of the word. Without the grace of God man is, from the point of view of morality or intentionality, completely helpless. He cannot by his own effort achieve any good whatsoever, whether by political participation or by any other kind of social or political engagement. By his own effort, indeed, he cannot achieve anything which is not sinful. Even those heroes of Rome's past who have shown the most exemplary courage have done so either out of the selfish desire for glory or out of misguided loyalty to gods or institutions which are not worthy objects of devotion. It is only his membership of the City of God or the earthly city which has reference to the ethical good of the individual. There is no one who does not belong to one or other of these cities; but these 'cities', as we have seen, are not confined to any particular place or any particular time. Nor, strictly speaking, can anyone be said to 'participate' in them: their members are not 'citizens' in a way that would have made sense to Aristotle. They are the communities of the elect and reprobate respectively, bound together by their members' common love, whether of God or self.

In this context, we may note Augustine's well-known rebuttal of the traditional claim of the Roman state to be the special embodiment of justice. He sets out to show that this claim is vacuous by way of his critique – begun at II,21 and resumed, several years later, at XIX,21 – of Cicero's discussion of the Roman commonwealth in his dialogue *De republica*. As part of this discussion, Cicero says – or causes Scipio Africanus Minor to say – that justice is part of the very essence of a commonwealth: that a commonwealth cannot even exist unless justice is present. But on this showing, Augustine observes, Rome herself never was a commonwealth: that is, according to Scipio's own definition, a moral community consisting not of a mere multitude, but of a *populus*, a people, 'united in fellowship by common agreement as to what is right and by a community of

interest'. What is justice? Augustine adopts the classical commonplace that justice is 'that virtue which gives to each his due'. But, he says – introducing a shift in the meaning of 'justice' that can hardly be regarded as fair – Rome never extended to the true God the worship which is His due.

What kind of justice is it, then, that takes a man away from the true God and subjects him to impure demons? Is this giving to each his due? Or are we to call a man unjust if he takes a piece of property away from one who has bought it and hands it over to someone who has no right to it, yet just if he takes himself away from the lordship of the God Who made him, and serves evil spirits? . . . Here, then, is not that 'common agreement as to what is right' by which a multitude is made into a 'people' whose 'property' a commonwealth is said to be. (XIX,21).

And what is true of pagan Rome is true by implication of all pagan states. Those who do not worship the true God cannot be just men; a multitude of such men cannot be a *populus* in the required sense; and such a multitude therefore cannot form a state which is, *stricto sensu*, just: which is, in short, a *res publica*, a commonwealth. To the extent that they make a relatively safe and orderly life possible for their subjects, pagan states can achieve a *semblance* of justice: justice, so to speak, in a loose or incomplete sense of the term. 'There was, of course, according to a more practicable definition, a commonwealth of a sort; and it was certainly better administered by the Romans of more ancient times than by those who have come after them.' But this is not *true* justice; for true justice 'does not exist other than in that commonwealth whose Founder and Ruler is Christ' (II,21). True justice can exist only among the citizens of the City of God, and will be fully realised only after this world ends, when the City of God, purged of all impure elements, will finally enjoy God for eternity.

These remarks may be taken in conjunction with Augustine's pronouncement at IV,4, where he makes use of the familiar story of Alexander and the pirate (a story probably known to him in the version given in Bk 3 of Cicero's *De republica*): 'Justice removed, then, what are kingdoms but great bands of robbers? What are bands of robbers themselves but little kingdoms?' Without justice, Augustine says – and presumably he intends this statement to apply to all pagan states – the state differs from a band of robbers only in

point of size and immunity from consequences. He suggests, indeed, that a state might actually originate in a gang of bandits. 'If, by the constant addition of desperate men, this scourge grows to such a size that it acquires territory, establishes a seat of government, occupies cities and subjugates peoples, it assumes the name of kingdom more openly. For this name is now manifestly conferred upon it not by the removal of greed, but by the addition of impunity.' Augustine possibly has in mind here the story, to which he refers at I,34 and II,29, of how Romulus originally peopled Rome by offering sanctuary to criminals. More than six hundred years later, writing to Bishop Hermann of Metz, Pope Gregory VII, in a conscious or unconscious paraphrase, says, 'Who does not know that kings and princes derive their origin from men ignorant of God who, at the instigation of the devil, the prince of this world, raised themselves up above their fellows by pride, plunder, treachery, murder and every kind of crime?'⁷

At its worst, then, the state is the institutionalisation of man's most characteristic and destructive weaknesses: greed; vanity; the lust for power, possession and glory. Even at its best, the pagan state cannot be a commonwealth, a moral community, properly so called. It can achieve only a semblance of justice: a justice which consists not in the absence but in the mere suppression of discord. None of this, however, is to imply that, strictly speaking, Augustine is hostile to the state or opposed to it. In this regard, we may make four points.

First, as an important part of his political thinking, Augustine acknowledges that even pagan states have an indispensable part to play in securing the peace and order which all men want: the peace for the sake of which even wars are waged, and without which even robbers cannot live. Certainly, this peace is not true peace: true peace, like true justice, exists only in heaven, when all the antagonisms associated with life in a fallen world have ceased (see XIX,27). Moreover, it is only a transient and unstable kind of peace, achieved and maintained by violence and fear, and often desired only so that ignoble ends may be pursued without interruption. But it is nonetheless peace of a kind, and, as such, is a kind of good: it brings

⁷ This letter may be read in translation in E. Emerton (ed.), *The Correspondence of Gregory VII* (New York, 1932), pp. 166ff.

back a measure of order to a world disordered by sin. In this sense, the state may be regarded not only as a consequence of and punishment for sin, but as a remedy: a means of restraining and controlling the disruptive aspects of human behaviour which are the result of sin. As such, it brings benefit to Christians and non-Christians alike; 'for, while the two cities are intermingled, we also make use of the peace of Babylon' (xix,26).

Second, despite its association with man's fallen condition, the state has not come into being against the wishes of God, as it were. On the contrary, its existence is in accordance with His wishes and at His command. The state has its place in the divine will and plan, foreknown, foreordained and with its own proper purpose. Voicing what was to become a commonplace of medieval political thought (although not, oddly enough, quoting the famous dictum of St Paul at Rom. 13,1ff), Augustine insists that all power comes from God, whether conferred upon good rulers or bad. 'He gives happiness in the kingdom of heaven only to the godly. Earthly kingdoms, however, He gives to the godly and ungodly alike, as it may please Him, Whose good pleasure is never unjust . . . He Who gave power . . . to the Christian Constantine also gave it to the apostate Julian' (v,21). Wicked rulers are instruments of God's punishment. The emperor Nero, for example, was a ruler noted for abominable cruelty and wickedness. 'But the power of lordship is given even to such men as this only by the providence of the supreme God, when He judges that the condition of human affairs is deserving of such lords. The divine voice is clear on this matter, for the wisdom of God speaks as follows: 'By me kings reign, and tyrants possess the land'' (v,19, quoting Prov. 8,15). (We may notice in passing here, however, that Augustine consistently fails to make the rather obvious distinction between the divine authority of the *institution* of government and the divine authority of the individual ruler. This omission was to have a significant bearing upon medieval discussions of whether or not an unjust ruler may be resisted.)⁸

Third, Augustine is certainly not without admiration for the deeds and fortitude of the heroes celebrated in the history of Rome: Marcus Regulus, Gaius Mucius Scaevola, the Decii, Curtius and

⁸ See R. W. and A. J. Carlyle, *A History of Mediaeval Political Theory in the West* (5th impression, Edinburgh and London, 1962), pp. 151; 169.

the rest. Misguided as they were in what they desired and loved, these are men who, in some ways, are a salutary example to the Christian (see especially v,18). Indeed, he suggests that God has allowed the Roman state to achieve greatness precisely in order to furnish us with such an example.

Thus, when illustrious kingdoms had long existed in the East, God willed that there should arise in the West an empire which, though later in time, should be more illustrious still in the breadth and greatness of its sway. And, in order that it might overcome the grave evils which had afflicted many other nations, He granted it to men who, for the sake of honour and praise and glory, so devoted themselves to their fatherland that they did not hesitate to place its safety before their own, even though they sought glory for themselves through it. (v,13)

Moreover, it was not only for the sake of rendering due reward to the citizens of Rome that her empire and glory were so greatly extended in the sight of men. This was done also for the advantage of the citizens of the eternal City during their pilgrimage here. It was done so that they might diligently and soberly contemplate such examples, and so see how great a love they owe to their supernal fatherland for the sake of life eternal, if an earthly city was so greatly loved by its citizens for the sake of merely human glory. (v,16)

Nor is Augustine without admiration for the intellectual achievements fostered by the culture of the pagan state. He speaks with consistent respect of Plato, Varro, Plotinus and Porphyry. His own philosophical range is somewhat restricted by his lack of all but a smattering of Greek. He seems, for example, to have first-hand knowledge of only the *Meno* and *Timaeus* of Plato in Latin translations. But it is clear that he cannot entirely shake off his respect for the accomplishments, insofar as he understands them, even of those whom he wishes to oppose.

Fourth, and predictably enough, Augustine considers that, in contrast to the radical injustice of the pagan state, the specifically Christian state comes as close to accomplishing justice as it is possible to come on earth. 'If', he says, at II,19 (quoting Psalm 148,11f),

'the kings of the earth and all nations, princes and all the judges of the earth, young men and maidens, old men and children',

people of every age and each sex; if those to whom John the Baptist spoke, even the tax gatherers and the soldiers: if all these together were to hear and embrace the Christian precepts of justice and moral virtue, then would the commonwealth adorn its lands with happiness in this present life and ascend to the summit of life eternal, there to reign in utmost blessedness.

The Christian state, imperfect though it inevitably is, can nonetheless provide a milieu within which the Church can do her work effectively and the Christian life can be lived by its citizens. The Christian ruler can, in his own person, furnish his subjects with an example of piety and humility. At v,24 Augustine gives a description *in nuce* of the life and tasks of the Christian emperor.

For we do not say that certain Christian emperors were happy because they ruled for a longer time, or because they died in peace and left behind sons to rule as emperors, or because they subdued the enemies of the commonwealth, or because they were able to avoid and suppress uprisings against them by hostile citizens. For even certain worshippers of demons, who do not belong to the kingdom of God to which these emperors belong, have deserved to receive these and other gifts and consolations of this wretched life; and this is to be attributed to His mercy, Who does not wish those who believe in Him to desire such things as their highest good. Rather, we say that they are happy if they rule justly; if they are not lifted up by the talk of those who accord them sublime honours or pay their respects with an excessive humility, but remember that they are only men; if they make their power the handmaid of His majesty by using it to spread His worship to the greatest possible extent; if they fear, love and worship God; if they love that Kingdom which they are not afraid to share with others more than their own; if they are slow to punish and swift to pardon; if they resort to punishment only when it is necessary to the government and defence of the commonwealth, and never to gratify their own enmity; if they grant pardon, not so that unjust men may enjoy impunity, but in the hope of bringing about their correction; if they compensate for whatever severe measures they may be forced to decree with the gentleness of mercy and the generosity of benevolence; if their own self-indulgence is as much restrained as it might have been unchecked; if they prefer to govern wicked desires more than any people whatsoever; if they do all these things not out of

craving for empty glory, but from love of eternal felicity; and if, for their sins, they do not neglect to offer to their true God the sacrifices of humility and contrition and prayer. We say that, for the time being, such Christian emperors are happy in hope and that, in time to come, when that to which we now look forward has arrived, they will be so in possession.

This *speculum principis* was to have many imitators in the centuries to come. Reading it, one is inevitably struck by the words, 'if they make their power the handmaid of His majesty by using it to spread His worship to the greatest possible extent'. Two chapters later in the same book (v,26), Augustine refers approvingly to Emperor Theodosius's famous submission to the authority of Bishop Ambrose of Milan in 390; and, in the same place, he congratulates that emperor on his readiness 'to assist the Church in her labours against the ungodly by means of the most just and merciful laws'. Also, we know from Augustine's letters on the subject that, despite initial misgivings, he came eventually to feel that the Church may and should call upon the secular magistrate to aid her in her struggle against heretics and schismatics.⁹ Certainly, it would be a major error of interpretation to suppose that, in the *City of God* or anywhere else, Augustine offers a 'theory' of Church and State, or *regnum* and *sacerdotium*, or that he suggests in any definite sense that the secular authorities are subordinate to or the servants of the Church. There is no doubt, however, that, in *The City of God* and elsewhere, he does present us with some of the components of such a theory.

Augustine's political thought cannot be called systematic. Arguably, indeed, it is rather misleading to synthesise his more or less scattered remarks into a continuous narrative. In fact, he does not really regard political relationships or doctrines as having any particular importance considered merely as such. After all, he says, 'what difference does it make under what rule a man lives who is soon to die, provided only that those who rule him do not compel him to do what is impious and wicked?' (v,17). It is largely because his political thought developed in so *ad hoc* a fashion and is expressed

⁹ For the development of Augustine's thought on this important topic, see H. A. Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St Augustine*, Ch. 6.

so incidentally that it is so notoriously full of inconsistency and ambiguity. Having said this, however, we may identify at least three important respects in which he is of enduring interest to the historian of political thought. First, Augustine confronts more fully than any of his Christian predecessors the ethical and political doctrines and assumptions of classical philosophy, at least insofar as these are mediated to him through Latin sources. In an intelligible sense, Augustine forms the turning-point from which the historian can date the beginning of the medieval Christianisation of political thought. Second, he develops a comprehensive critique of the moral and political tradition of imperial Rome: he deconstructs the ideology of Rome as the eternal city, whose peace and justice are the peace and justice of the world.¹⁰ Third – and this, perhaps, is the main point – his ideas form a clear and important stream of inspiration for political writers from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries. The doctrine of the two cities (much misunderstood and misrepresented, but importantly so); the association of political power with sin, and with all that is base, ignoble and destructive in man; the idea of man's utter dependence upon divine grace, as bestowed through the agency of the Church, if he is to be anything more than a condemned sinner; the suggestion that the Church might and should call upon secular rulers to assist her: all these things were to take their place alongside the other familiar themes of medieval political controversy. As Augustine wishes the terms to be understood, a people, and therefore a commonwealth, cannot be truly such unless, in addition to whatever legal or social bond it has, it is united by a common worship of the true God. Viewed in terms of the subsequent history of political thought, this is, to say the least, a rather pregnant idea.

¹⁰ On this subject, see especially Donald Earl, *The Moral and Political Tradition of Rome* (London, 1967).

A brief chronology of Augustine's life

| | |
|---------|--|
| 354 | Born Thagaste, 13 November. |
| 370 | Began to study rhetoric at Carthage. |
| 373–80 | Attracted to Manichaeism; became a Manichaean auditor. |
| 374 | Taught rhetoric at Thagaste and Carthage. |
| 375 | Inspired to seek wisdom by Cicero's <i>Hortensius</i> . |
| 374–83 | Taught rhetoric at Carthage. |
| 383 | Taught rhetoric at Rome; became disenchanted with Manichaeism. |
| 384 | Accepted position at Milan; fell under the influence of St Ambrose and Milanese Christians. |
| 386 | Converted to Christianity; earliest written work, <i>Contra academicos</i> , completed at Cassiciacum. |
| 387 | Baptised, Holy Saturday, by St Ambrose. |
| 388 | Established small monastic community at Thagaste. |
| 391 | Ordained priest at Hippo; established monastic community there. |
| 396 | Became bishop of Hippo. |
| 397–400 | <i>Confessions</i> . |
| 413 | Began work on the <i>City of God</i> . |
| 426 | Finished the <i>City of God</i> . |
| 430 | Died, 28 August, at Hippo. |

Bibliographical note

The literature on Augustine is, of course, very extensive indeed. The following is only a selection, and, with one exception, does not include works in languages other than English.

Augustine's life is known to us chiefly from his own autobiographical writings: *Confessions* and *Retractationes*, the latter being a kind of literary autobiography. *Confessions* has been translated into English many times, with varying degrees of success and sometimes in abridged editions. See, for example, the translation by H. Chadwick (Oxford, 1991). We also have a biography of Augustine written, probably within two or three years of his death, by St Possidius, bishop of Calama: *Sancti Augustini Vita Scripta a Possidio Episcopo*, edited with introduction, notes and an English translation by Herbert T. Weiskotten (Princeton, 1919). There is another translation by F. R. Hoare in his *The Western Fathers* (London, 1954). There are excellent modern biographies of Augustine by Gerald Bonner (*St Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*, Oxford, 1986) and Peter Brown (*Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, London 1967; this book contains chronological tables of Augustine's works and lists of English translations). See also J. Burnaby, *Amor Dei* (London, 1938) and J. J. O'Meara, *The Young Augustine* (London, 1980).

For matters of general, philosophical and literary background, see especially A. H. Armstrong, *An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy* (London, 1965); P. Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London, 1972); C. N. Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture* (Oxford, 1940); E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Oxford, 1965); D. Earl, *The Moral and Political*

Tradition of Rome (London, 1967); W. H. C. Frend, *The Donatist Church* (Oxford, 1952); A. Momigliano (ed.), *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* (London, 1963); J. J. O'Meara, *Porphyry's Philosophy from Oracles in Augustine* (Paris, 1959); H. H. Scullard, *A History of the Roman World from 753 to 146 BC* (London, 1935); and *From the Gracchi to Nero* (London, 1959). For a general survey of Augustine's thought and intellectual development, see Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian* (London, 1970); see also E. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine* (New York, 1960).

The standard work on Augustine's political thought considered at its most general is H. A. Deane's *The Political and Social Ideas of St Augustine* (London, 1963). This book is essential reading for anyone who wishes to set the *City of God* in its proper context. A useful anthology of political passages from Augustine's writings been compiled by H. Paolucci, *The Political Writings of Saint Augustine of Hippo*. This was published as a Gateway Paperback in 1962, but is unfortunately now out of print. See also G. J. Laverre, 'The Political Realism of Saint Augustine', *Augustinian Studies* 11 (1980); 'The Influence of Saint Augustine on Early Medieval Political Theory', *Augustinian Studies* 12 (1981); R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (London, 1970). On the *City of God* specifically, see N. H. Baynes, 'The Political Ideas of St. Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*' (Historical Association Pamphlet, London, 1936); J. N. Figgis, *The Political Aspects of St. Augustine's 'City of God'* (London, 1921); E. L. Fortin, 'Augustine's City of God and the Modern Historical Consciousness', *Review of Politics*, 41 (1979); R. Martin, 'The Two Cities in Augustine's Political Philosophy', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 33 (1972); T. E. Mommsen, 'St. Augustine and the Christian Idea of Progress: The Background of the City of God', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 12 (1951). H.-X. Arquillière, *L'Augustinisme politique* (revised edition, Paris, 1972) should be regarded as indispensable.

When the reader comes across a particularly baffling passage, a good plan is to compare the same passage in several different translations, in the hope – often justified – that the various translators' shots at making sense of it will add up to something intelligible. There are a number of translations which might be used for this purpose. The translation of Augustine's works published under the

general editorship of Marcus Dods (15 vols., Edinburgh, 1872–8) is, on the whole, excellent; although it is gradually being supplanted by more modern versions. The translation of the *City of God* by Marcus Dods *et al.* which forms part of this series (vols. 1 and II) is on the whole quite faithful to the original, although there are uneven passages and some substantial inaccuracies. (*Confessions* is vol. XIV of this series.) The seventeenth-century translation of the *City of God* by John Healy, edited by R. V. G. Tasker and introduced by Sir Ernest Barker (London and New York, 1945), is, to put it charitably, very free. The Loeb Classical Library edition (1957–72) seems to me very accurate, but suffers somewhat from being the work of several hands. It also suffers from being published in seven inconvenient little volumes. Henry Bettenson's version (Penguin Classics, London, 1984) is in many respects useful and clear; but this translator is in my view rather too much given to paraphrase and anachronism. Heavily abridged translations have been done by R. H. Barrow, *Introduction to St. Augustine, The City of God* (London, 1950) and by J. W. C. Wand (London, 1963). The edition by J. E. C. Welldon (*S. Aurelii Augustini . . . De Civitate Dei . . .* (2 vols., London, 1924), though not a translation, may be found useful for its very full notes in English. Bishop Welldon's edition also has several useful appendices in which matters are discussed which it has not been possible to include here.

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The City of God against the Pagans

Book 1

Preface: The plan and argument of the work here undertaken

Most glorious is the City of God: whether in this passing age, where she dwells by faith¹ as a pilgrim among the ungodly, or in the security of that eternal home which she now patiently awaits until 'righteousness shall return unto judgment',² but which she will then possess perfectly, in final victory and perfect peace. In this work, O Marcellinus, most beloved son – due to you by my promise – I have undertaken to defend her against those who favour their own gods above her Founder. The work is great and arduous; but God is our helper.³

I know, however, what efforts are needed to persuade the proud how great is that virtue of humility which, not by dint of any human loftiness, but by divine grace bestowed from on high, raises us above all the earthly pinnacles which sway in this inconstant age. For the King and Founder of this City of which we are resolved to speak has revealed a maxim of the divine law in the Scriptures of His people, where it is said, 'God resisteth the proud but giveth grace unto the humble.'⁴ But the swollen fancy of the proud-spirited envies even this utterance, which belongs to God, and loves to hear the following words spoken in its own praise: 'To spare the humble and subdue the proud.'⁵

Thus, when the nature of the work here undertaken requires us to say something of it, and as occasion arises, we must not pass over in silence the earthly city also: that city which, when it seeks mastery, is itself mastered by the lust for mastery even though all the nations serve it.

¹ Cf. Hab. 2,4; Rom. 1,17; Gal. 3,11; Heb. 10,38.

² Psalm 94,15.

³ Cf. Psalm 118,6.

⁴ James 4,6; 1 Pet. 5,5.

⁵ Virgil, *Aen.*, 6,853.

**I Of the enemies of Christ's name whom the
barbarians spared for Christ's sake during the sack of
the city**

For it is from this earthly city that the foes against whom the City of God must be defended come forth. Many of these foes have, indeed, become honourable enough citizens of the City of God when the error of their ungodliness has been corrected. Many, however, still burn fiercely against her with the fires of hatred, and are ungrateful to her Redeemer for His manifest blessings. They forget that they would not be able to wag their tongues against her today had they not, when fleeing from the enemy's steel, found in her sacred places the lives in which they take such pride. Have not even those Romans whom the barbarians spared for Christ's sake become enemies of Christ's name? The shrines of the martyrs and the churches of the apostles are our witnesses; for during the sack of the city they sheltered those who fled to them: both their own people and strangers.⁶ Thus far the bloodthirsty foe raged, but no farther. There, his savage fury acknowledged its limit, and those of the enemy who were merciful conducted thither those whom they had spared, lest others who did not possess a similar mercy might fall upon them. Indeed, whenever those savage men, who elsewhere raged in the usual fashion of an enemy, came to the place where what the rules of war would have permitted elsewhere was forbidden, all the ferocity with which they smote was curbed, and their greed for captives subdued.

In this way, many escaped who now bewail these Christian times and impute to Christ the ills which the city suffered. But the good which they received when, in honour of Christ, they were permitted to live: this they impute not to Christ, but to their own fate. If they had any right perception, they would rather attribute the bitter and harsh things which they endured at their enemies' hands to divine providence. For divine providence often corrects and destroys the corrupt ways of men by wars, and tests the righteous and praiseworthy by such afflictions of this mortal life, either conveying them to a better world when they have been proved, or detaining them still on this earth for further service.

⁶ Cf. Orosius, *Hist.*, 7,39; Jerome, *Epist.* 27,12f.

Moreover, they ought to attribute it to these Christian times that, contrary to the usages of war, the cruel barbarians spared them in the name of Christ: either anywhere at all, or in those places – the broadest of places, chosen to contain great multitudes, so that mercy might be bestowed more largely – especially dedicated to Christ's name. They ought, therefore, to give thanks to God: they ought now to flee to His name in truth, in order to escape the punishment of eternal fire, seeing that so many of them made use of that name falsely in order to escape the pains of the immediate rout. For among those whom you now see insolently and shamelessly insulting the servants of Christ are many who would not have escaped that ruin and disaster had they not feigned to be servants of Christ themselves. And now, with ungrateful pride and most ungodly folly, they oppose His name in their impurity of heart, and so incur the punishment of eternal darkness, who once flew to that name with lying countenance so that they might enjoy a passing light.

2 That in no wars ever before recorded have the
victors spared the vanquished for the sake of their
gods

Many histories have been composed of the wars waged both before Rome was founded and after her rise and accession to imperial power. Let our adversaries read these histories and produce any instance of a city captured by invaders where the enemies who seized it spared those whom they found taking refuge in the temples of their gods. Or let them produce an instance of any barbarian lord who commanded that, when a town was entered, no one should be smitten who was found in this temple or that.⁷ Did not Aeneas see Priam before the altars 'drench with blood the fires that he himself had blessed'?⁸ Did not Diomedes and Ulysses 'slay the guardians of the topmost citadel, seize the sacred image, and with bloody hands

⁷ There are instances, however. After the siege of Tyre, Alexander spared those who had taken refuge in the temple of Hercules (Arrian, *Anabasis*, 7,24). After the battle of Coronea, Agesilaus showed similar mercy to the Theban hoplites who had fled to the temple of Itonian Athene (Plutarch, *Agesilaus*, 19).

⁸ *Aen.*, 2,502.

dare to touch the fillets of the virgin goddess'?⁹ Nor, moreover, are the words which come after these true; that 'henceforth, the hope of the Greeks dwindled and passed away'. For, even after this, they conquered; after this they destroyed Troy with fire and sword; and it was after this that they hewed down Priam as he sought sanctuary at the altars.

Nor was it because she lost Minerva that Troy perished. For what had Minerva herself lost first, that she was unable to prevent Troy from perishing? Her guards, perhaps? Exactly so: for when these were slain, she could be stolen. It was not, therefore, the men who were protected by the effigy, but the effigy by the men. Why was she worshipped, then, so that she might defend the fatherland and its people: she who could not manage to defend even her own guards?

3 How imprudent the Romans were in believing that they might derive any benefit from the gods who could not protect Troy

Behold what manner of gods they were to whom the Romans were pleased to entrust the protection of the city! O too great and miserable error! They are angry with us when we say such things about their gods; yet they are not angry with their own authors, to whom they paid a fee to teach them such things! Indeed, they deemed those very teachers entirely worthy to receive a public stipend and other honours. In the works of Virgil (who is read by small boys precisely so that, when their minds are steeped in this great and most famous and best of all poets, he may not easily be abolished into forgetfulness; as Horace says: 'New vessels long retain the taste of what they first contained')¹⁰ – in the works of this Virgil, then, Juno is introduced as hostile to the Trojans, and as inciting against them Aeolus, king of the winds, saying, 'A people hateful to me now sails the Tyrrhenian sea, bearing Ilium and her vanquished gods to Italy.'¹¹ Was it prudent, then, thus to entrust Rome, lest she be vanquished, to these 'vanquished gods'? But perhaps this

⁹ *Aen.*, 2, 166ff.

¹⁰ *Epist.* 1, 2, 69f.

¹¹ *Aen.*, 1, 67f.

Juno spoke as an angry woman, not knowing what she said. What of Aeneas himself, then, so often called 'the Pious'? Does he not speak as follows: 'Panthus, Othrys's son, priest of the citadel and of Phoebus, bearing in his hands the vanquished gods, and dragging his little grandson, comes running to my door, beside himself'?¹² Aeneas, too, therefore, does not hesitate to say that the gods were 'vanquished'. And is it not clear that the gods were rather entrusted to him than he to them, when it is said to him, 'Troy commends her sacred objects and her gods to you'?¹³

Virgil, then, speaks thus of the gods: he says that they were vanquished and commended to a man so that, though vanquished, they might somehow escape. Is it not madness, therefore, to suppose that Rome could wisely have been entrusted to such protectors, and that she would not have been sacked had she not lost them? On the contrary: to worship vanquished gods as rulers and defenders – what is this but to hold fast not to good deities, but to bad omens? How much wiser to believe not that Rome would have avoided that disaster had the gods not perished first, but rather that the gods themselves would have perished long before had not Rome protected them for as long as she could! For who, when he directs his attention to the matter, does not see how vain it is to suppose that she could not be conquered while under vanquished defenders, and that she therefore perished because she lost the gods who were her guardians? In truth, the only cause of her perishing was that she chose to have guardians who could themselves perish. When they wrote and sang of vanquished gods, therefore, the poets were not merely lying to serve their own purposes. Rather, they were men of intelligence whom truth had compelled to make confession.

But it will be more appropriate to treat of these matters carefully and fully in another place.¹⁴ For the time being, I shall set out, as well as I can, what I have undertaken to say of those ungrateful men who blasphemously impute to Christ the evil which they deserve to suffer by reason of their own moral wickedness. The fact that even such as these were spared for Christ's sake they do not condescend to notice, and in the madness of their blasphemous wickedness they exercise their tongues against His name. They exercise those very

¹² *Aen.*, 2,319f.

¹³ *Aen.*, 2,293.

¹⁴ Bk III,2ff.

tongues which used that name falsely so that they might live: those tongues which, in the places consecrated to Him, they restrained in terror. Then, they were kept safe and protected in a place where, thanks to Him, they were unharmed by their enemies; yet now they burst forth from that sanctuary as His enemies, cursing Him!

4 Of the sanctuary of Juno in Troy, which freed no one from the Greeks, and the churches of the apostles, which protected all who sought refuge in them from the barbarians

As I have said, Troy herself, the mother of the Roman people, was not able to protect her own citizens, in the places consecrated to her gods, from the fire and steel of the Greeks – who themselves worshipped those same gods. Rather, indeed, ‘in Juno’s sanctuary the chosen guards, Phoenix and the fell Ulysses, kept watch over the spoils. Here, at every hand, the Trojan treasure, stripped from the burning shrines and altars of the gods – bowls of solid gold, and looted finery – are brought together, great crowds of boys and fearful women stand about.’¹⁵

The place consecrated to so great a goddess, then, was chosen not so that no one might lawfully be led out of it captive, but so that captives might be imprisoned in it at pleasure. Compare, now, that sanctuary – not the sanctuary of one of the common or vulgar mob of gods, but of the queen of all the gods, the sister and wife of Jupiter himself!¹⁶ – with the memorial shrines of our apostles. Into the former were carried spoils stripped from the burning temples of the gods: not to be returned to the vanquished, but to be divided up among the victors. Into the latter, the possessions of the vanquished, even though found elsewhere, were brought back with honour and most conscientious scruple. In the former, liberty was lost; in the latter, preserved. In the former, bondage was enforced; in the latter, proscribed. In the former, men were forced into slavery as the property of the enemies who had overcome them; in the latter, they were conducted to freedom by the merciful. Finally: the temple of Juno was chosen by the fickle and insignifi-

¹⁵ *Aen.*, 2,761ff.

¹⁶ *Aen.*, 1,46f.

cant Greeks as the scene of avarice and pride; but the churches of Christ were chosen, even by the monstrous barbarian, as places of mercy and humility.

Perhaps, though, the Greeks did after all, in that victory of theirs, spare the temples of the gods whom they shared with the Trojans? Perhaps they did not dare to smite or enslave the miserable and defeated Trojans who took refuge in them? Perhaps, after the fashion of poets, Virgil has misled us? No. On the contrary, he has depicted the usual custom of an enemy when sacking a city.

5 Of the account which Cato gives of the universal custom of an enemy when sacking a city

For as Sallust, a historian noted for his veracity, writes, Cato himself did not omit to mention this custom in the speech which he delivered to the Senate concerning the conspirators. 'Maidens and boys are violated; children plucked from the embrace of their parents; the mothers of families endure whatever might be the pleasure of the victors; temples and houses are despoiled; there is slaughter and burning; in short, all is filled with arms, corpses, slaughter and lamentation.'¹⁷ Had he here made no mention of the temples, we might have concluded that the enemy was disposed to spare the seats of the gods. Yet the Roman temples had cause to fear these horrors not from alien foes, but from Catiline and his accomplices: most distinguished senators and Roman citizens! These, however, were plainly abandoned men, and the parricides of their fatherland.

6 That not even the Romans, when they captured cities, spared the vanquished in their temples

But why need our account review the many nations which have waged war with one another and never spared the vanquished in the seats of the gods? Let us consider the Romans themselves. Let us, I say, recollect those very Romans who in high praise are said 'to spare the humble and subdue the proud', and who preferred 'rather to forgive than to avenge a wrong'.¹⁸

¹⁷ *Catil.*, 51.9; although this is a mistake: the speech to which Augustine refers is Caesar's, not Cato's.

¹⁸ *Catil.*, 9.5.

As their dominion grew broader, the Romans stormed, captured and overthrew many great cities. Let them tell us, then, what temples they were accustomed to exempt, to ensure that any who sought sanctuary there might be free. Did they do this, perhaps, but the writers of their annals say nothing of it? Would those writers, who with such great zeal sought things to praise, omit to mention what they themselves would have regarded as instances of outstanding piety? Marcus Marcellus, the esteemed Roman personage who captured the splendid city of Syracuse, is said to have wept before its fall, and to have shed his own tears before he shed its blood. Also, he took care to preserve the modesty even of his enemy; for before the victor gave the command to enter the city, he issued an order that no free person was to be violated. The city was, however, overthrown according to the custom of war. Nowhere do we read that this most chaste and clement commander gave instructions that anyone who took refuge in this temple or that should remain unmolested; and this certainly would not have been omitted by writers who could not pass over in silence either his weeping or his edict that modesty was not to be outraged. Fabius, conqueror of the city of Tarentum, is praised for having abstained from looting its images. Indeed, when his scribe raised with him the question of what he wished done with the many images of the gods which had been captured, he even flavoured his restraint with a joke. For he asked of what kind they were; and when word was brought to him that many of them were not only large but armed, he said, 'Let us leave these fearsome gods to the Tarentines!' Since, therefore, the authors of the Roman annals could not refrain from mentioning either the weeping of the one or the laughter of the other – neither the former's chaste mercy nor the latter's humorous restraint – would they omit to mention it if these commanders had shown such forbearance to any men, in honour of their gods, as to forbid slaughter or captivity in any temple?

7 That the cruelties which occurred during the sack of Rome were in accordance with the customs of war, whereas the acts of clemency which took place arose from the power of Christ's name

Therefore, whatever devastation, slaughter, looting, burning and affliction was committed during that most recent calamity at Rome,

all this was at any rate done according to the customs of war. What set a new and unprecedented standard in such affairs, however, was that the savage barbarians appeared under an aspect so gentle that the most capacious churches were chosen and set aside by them to be filled with the people who were spared. These churches were places in which no man was to be smitten, whence no man was to be dragged, into which many were led by their merciful enemies in order to be set free, and whence none were led away into captivity by cruel foes. Whoever does not see that this is to be attributed to the name of Christ and to the Christian age is blind. Whoever sees it but does not praise it is ungrateful. Whoever would begrudge such praise is mad. God forbid that any prudent man should impute this merely to the ferocious barbarians! For their minds, utterly savage and utterly cruel, were dismayed, bridled and miraculously tempered by Him Who long ago said through the prophet, 'I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from them.'¹⁹

8 Of the advantages and disadvantages which are for the most part common to both good men and bad

Someone will say, 'But why did the divine mercy extend even to the wicked and ungrateful?' What are we to suppose, except that it was held out by Him Who daily 'maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust'?²⁰ Some, reflecting upon this, have repented of their ungodliness and reformed themselves. Others, however, have, as the apostle says, despised 'the riches of God's goodness and His forbearance by reason of their hardness of heart and their impenitent heart'. These have treasured up 'for themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, Who will render to every man according to his deeds'.²¹ Nonetheless, the forbearance of God invites the wicked to repentance, just as the chastisement of God teaches forbearance to the good. So too, the mercy of God embraces the good, to cherish them, just as God's severity seizes

¹⁹ Psalm 89,33f.

²⁰ Matt. 5,45.

²¹ Rom. 2,4ff.

the wicked, to punish them. It has pleased the divine providence to prepare for the righteous in the world to come good things which will not be enjoyed by the unrighteous, and punishments for the ungodly with which the good will not be tormented. He has, however, willed that the good and evil things of this world should be common to both, so that we may neither grasp too eagerly after those goods which are seen to be possessed by the wicked also, nor dishonourably flee those evils with which even the good are generally afflicted.

Also, of the highest importance here is the use made both of those things which are deemed fortunate and those which are called adverse. For the good man is neither buoyed up by the good things of this world nor cast down by its ills; whereas the wicked man, because he is corrupted by good fortune, experiences misfortunes of this kind as punishments. Nonetheless, God often clearly shows Himself to be at work even in the distribution of good and bad fortune. For, plainly, if every sin were visited now with evident punishment, nothing would be reserved for the last judgment. On the other hand, if no sin were punished now by a clearly divine intervention, it would be believed that there is no divine providence. So too in the case of prosperity: if God did not grant it to some who pray as the clearest possible proof of His bounty, we should say that such things are not His to give. On the other hand, if He were to grant it to all who pray, we should judge such things to be no more than the due reward of our service, and such service would make us not godly, but, rather, greedy and covetous.

Although this is so, however, the good and the wicked are not themselves without differences merely because, in those cases where they are afflicted equally, there is no difference in what they both suffer. For the dissimilarity of the sufferers remains even where there is a similarity in what they undergo; and even though they suffer the same torment, virtue and vice are nonetheless not the same. In the same fire, gold glows but chaff smokes, and under the same flail straw is crushed and grain purified; nor is the oil of the olive mingled with the lees because extracted under the weight of the same press. By the same token, when one and the same force falls upon the good and the wicked, the former are purged and purified but the latter damned, ruined and destroyed. Hence it is that, under the same affliction, the wicked hate and blaspheme God

while the good pray and praise Him. What is important, then, is not what is suffered, but by whom; for, stirred up by the same motion, mud gives forth a dreadful smell, yet ointment has a sweet fragrance.

9 Of the reasons why correction is inflicted upon the good and the wicked equally

Bearing these things carefully in mind, therefore, what did the Christians suffer in that time of devastation that would not serve rather to raise them up than harm them? First, let them reflect humbly upon those very sins by reason of which God in His anger has filled the world with such great calamities. For though they are very far from being shameful and ungodly criminals, they still do not find themselves so entirely unacquainted with fault as to judge themselves undeserving even of temporal penalties for their misdeeds. Let us leave aside the fact that each man, no matter how praiseworthy his life may be, succumbs now and then to bodily lusts. No doubt he does not fall into dreadful crimes and the depths of shame and the abomination of ungodliness; but at least he commits some sins either rarely, or, in the case of lesser sins, so much the more frequently. Leaving this aside, however, is there anyone, pray, who treats as they should be treated those very persons on account of whose horrible pride, luxury, avarice and execrable wickedness and impiety, God, as He warned long ago, now smites the earth? Is there anyone whose life among them is as a life lived among such people ought to be?

For often do we ignore the duty of teaching and admonishing, and sometimes even of rebuking and correcting, sinners. We do this either when we weary of the effort, or when we hesitate to offend their dignity, or because we wish to avoid enmities which might impede and injure us in respect of some temporal thing which either our greed still desires to obtain or our infirmity fears to lose. So it is, then, that, even though the lives of wicked men are displeasing to the good, so that the good do not fall with them into that damnation which is prepared for the wicked after this life, nonetheless, because they are lenient towards the damnable sins of the wicked, the good are justly scourged alongside them in this world even though their own sins are light and venial, and even though they

certainly do not deserve to suffer eternal punishment. It is right that they should know bitterness in this life when they are afflicted by God in common with the wicked; for, because they loved the sweetness of this life, they neglected to be bitter to the wicked.

If anyone refrains from rebuking and correcting evildoers because he is waiting for a more propitious time, or for fear of making matters worse by doing so, or because he fears that, if he does so, others who are weak may be discouraged from living a good and godly life and driven and turned away from the faith: this restraint is clearly occasioned not by greed, but by the counsel of love. It is blameworthy, however, when men who live differently from the wicked, and abhor their deeds, nonetheless spare the sins of others when they ought to reform and reprove them. It is blameworthy, that is, when they do this for fear of offending persons who might injure them in respect of things which good men may, indeed, lawfully and innocently use, but which they are using more greedily than they should, given that they are pilgrims in this world, bearing with them the hope of a heavenly country.

Many Christians are, of course, weaker men: men who live a married life; who have, or wish to have, children; and who have houses and families. It is to these that the apostle speaks in the churches, teaching them how they should live and admonishing them: wives with husbands and husbands with wives; children with parents and parents with children; servants with masters and masters with servants.²² And these, because they take pleasure in acquiring many temporal goods and many earthly things, are afraid to lose these things. But it is not only persons of this kind who do not dare to offend even those whose lives, utterly foul and depraved, displease them. On the contrary: even those who embrace a higher order of life – who are not entangled in the bonds of matrimony, and who are moderate in their use of food and raiment – often abstain from chiding the wicked. They do so because they fear the treacheries of the wicked and their assaults on their reputation and wellbeing. Thus, though they do not fear them so greatly that any threats or wickedness whatsoever would induce them to commit similar offences themselves, they are nonetheless unwilling to rebuke crimes that they would not join with the wicked in commit-

²² Eph. 5,22–6,9; Coloss. 3,18ff.

ting. They are reluctant to do so, even though their rebukes might correct others, lest, if such correction prove impossible, their own wellbeing and reputation should encounter peril or destruction. And this is not because they consider their wellbeing and reputation to be necessary to secure the instruction of others. Rather, it is because of a weakness which loves a flattering tongue and human praise, and fears the judgments of the vulgar and the hurt or destruction of the body.²³ It is, in short, because of certain ties of selfishness, and not the offices of love.

This seems to me, therefore, no small part of the reason why good and wicked men are afflicted alike when it pleases God to punish abandoned morals with the infliction of temporal penalties. For both are afflicted together not because they lead a wicked life together, but because they love this present life. They love it, not equally, indeed, but together nonetheless; whereas the good ought to despise it so that the wicked, rebuked and corrected, may attain to eternal life. If, however, the wicked refuse to be their companions in attaining it, let them be borne and loved as enemies; for, as long as they live, it will always be uncertain whether their minds will not be changed for the better.

The position of laymen who do not readily rebuke the wicked is not as bad as that of the clergy to whom, through the prophet, it is said: 'He shall die in his sin; but his blood I shall require at the watchman's hand.'²⁴ The latter's is a much graver case, because the 'watchmen' – that is, those who are set over the people – have been appointed in the churches precisely so that they may not be lenient in rebuking sins. Nor, however, is that man free from guilt of this kind who, even though he is not set over them, nonetheless notices many sins deserving of admonition and reproof in the people with whom he is associated by the necessities of this life, yet ignores them: who ignores them because he is afraid of giving offence, and for the sake of those things which it is not unworthy to use in this life, but which it is unworthy to love so much.

Then again, there is another reason why the good are afflicted with temporal evils, as in the case of Job: so that the human spirit may be tested in itself, and the great strength of its piety known, by which it loves God even without reward.

²³ Cf. 1 Cor. 4,3.

²⁴ Ezek. 33,6.

10 That the saints suffer no loss in losing temporal things

Having duly considered and investigated these things, then, let us now turn to the question of whether any evil has befallen the faithful and godly that was not turned to their good. Or are we to conclude that the utterance of the apostle was in vain when he said, 'We know that all things work together for good to them that love God'?²⁵ They lost all they had. Their faith? Their godliness? The goods of the inward man who is rich before God?²⁶ These are the riches of the Christians, of which the great apostle spoke:

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.²⁷

Those who lost their earthly riches in the sack, therefore, if they had held those things in the manner of which they had heard, as one poor without but rich within – that is, if they had made use of the world as if not using it²⁸ – would have been able to say, with one sorely tempted yet never conquered: 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return into the earth: the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; as it pleased the Lord, so has it come to pass: blessed be the name of the Lord.'²⁹ As a good servant, Job held the will of his Lord to be a great treasure in itself, through attendance upon which his spirit should grow rich. Nor was he saddened to lose in life those things which he would in any case shortly lose in death. But those weaker Christians who, even though they did not prefer these earthly goods to Christ, nonetheless clung to them with no small desire, discovered in losing them how much they had sinned in loving them. For they grieved in

²⁵ Rom. 8,28.

²⁶ Cf. Luke 12,21.

²⁷ 1 Tim. 6,6ff.

²⁸ Cf. 1 Cor. 7,31.

²⁹ Job 1,21.

proportion as, in the words of the apostle quoted above, they had pierced themselves through with many sorrows. For it was fitting that the lesson of experience should be added to those who had for so long neglected the lesson of speech.

When the apostle says, 'They that will be rich fall into temptation',³⁰ and so on, he is in truth condemning not the possession of riches, but greed for them. For, speaking elsewhere, he teaches,

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.³¹

Those who made such use of their riches are consoled for light losses by great gains. They are more gladdened by those spiritual things which they have preserved all the more securely by freely giving of their earthly goods, than saddened by the loss of those things which they would have lost anyway, even had they fearfully withheld them. For they could lose nothing on earth save that which they would be ashamed to carry away from it. They heeded the counsel of God, Who said to them: 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.'³² They have proved in time of tribulation how wise they were in not despising that truest Teacher, that most faithful and redoubtable Guardian of their treasure. Many men, indeed, rejoiced that they had laid up their earthly riches in a place where, as it happened, the enemy did not break through. How much more certainly and securely, though, were those able to rejoice who, by the counsel of God, had betaken themselves to that place where the enemy could not possibly break through!

My friend Paulinus, bishop of Nola, is a man who willingly abandoned immense wealth and become exceedingly poor, yet

³⁰ 1 Tim. 6,9.

³¹ 1 Tim. 6,17ff.

³² Matt 6,19ff.

abundantly holy. I learned from him afterwards that, when the barbarians sacked Nola itself and he was held captive by them, he used to pray in his heart: 'O Lord, let me not be tortured for the sake of gold and silver; for Thou knowest where all my treasures are.' He kept all his goods where he had been counselled to hoard and treasure them up by Him Who had foretold that these evils would come to pass in the world.

In any case, those who obeyed the Lord when He taught them where and how they should lay up their treasures did not lose even their earthly riches when the barbarian invasion came. By contrast, those who now regret that they did not obey have learnt the right use of such things: if not by the wisdom which would have forestalled their loss, at least by the experience which has followed it.

Again, some good and Christian men were subjected to torture in order to make them surrender their goods to the enemy. But these could neither betray nor lose that good by which they were themselves made good. Also, if they preferred to be tortured rather than forsake the mammon of unrighteousness,¹³ they were not good. Rather, those who suffered as much for gold as they ought to have suffered for Christ should have been moved by this to learn to love Him. They should have learned to love Him Who enriches those who suffer for Him with eternal felicity, rather than gold and silver; rather than the gold and silver for which, whether they concealed them by lying or relinquished them by truth-telling, it was wholly worthless to suffer. For no one lost Christ by confessing Him under torture, and no one saved their gold other than by denying Him. Perhaps, then, the tortures which taught them to love an incorruptible good were of more benefit to them than those goods whose love brought torture upon their heads without any valuable fruit.

But there were certain others who, even though they had nothing to hand over, were tortured because they were not believed. Perhaps, however, these persons were greedy to possess. Perhaps, though poor, they were not so by a holy act of will. To these, then, it was necessary to demonstrate that not only wealth, but even the desire for it, is worthy of such tortures. And even if they had no hidden store of gold and silver because they had resolved to lead a better life – I do not know if there were any such, to whom it

¹³ Cf. Luke 16,9.

happened that they were tortured in the belief that they had wealth: but even if this did happen, he who under those tortures confessed holy poverty surely confessed Christ. For this reason, even if he did not succeed in making his enemies believe him, the confessor of holy poverty could not be tortured without a heavenly reward.

They say that many persons, including Christians, were laid low by the protracted famine. This also, however, the good and faithful turned to right use by bearing it with godliness. For those whom the famine slew it rescued from the ills of this life, as does bodily sickness, and those whom it did not slay it taught to live more moderately; it taught them to fast more diligently.

11 Of the end of this temporal life, and whether it matters if it comes later or sooner

But many Christians were slaughtered, and many were consumed by a great variety of dreadful deaths. If this is hard to bear, however, it is at any rate common to all who have been born into this life. I know this: that no one has ever died who had not been going to die eventually. The end of life makes a long life the same as a short one; for the one is not better and the other worse, and the one is not greater and the other lesser, when both no longer exist. But what does it matter what kind of death has put an end to this life, as long as he whose life has ended is not compelled to die a second time? And when, under the daily contingencies of this life, every mortal man is, so to speak, threatened with innumerable deaths, and it is uncertain which one of them will overtake him, is it, I ask, better to suffer one and die, or to live and fear them all? I do not overlook the fact that a man would rather live long and fear many deaths than die once and dread none of them thereafter. But it is one thing to consider death as something that the fearful instinct of the flesh seeks in its infirmity to flee from, and another to contemplate it carefully with the reason of the mind. Death is not to be deemed an evil when a good life precedes it; nor is death made an evil except by what follows death. Therefore, those who are of necessity bound to die need not care greatly by what means they will eventually die, but into what place they will be brought by dying. Since, then, Christians know how much better was the death of the godly pauper licked by the tongues of dogs than that of the

impious rich man clad in purple and fine linen,³⁴ what harm did those terrible deaths do to the dead who had lived well?

12 Of the burial of men's bodies, and that Christians lose nothing even if burial be denied

Moreover, so great was that massacre that not all the bodies of the dead could be buried. A godly faith, however, does not much shrink from this fact, holding fast to the assurance that not even the ravenging beasts will injure the bodies of those who are to rise again,³⁵ and that not a hair of their heads will perish.³⁶ If anything that the foe had chosen to do to the bodies of the dead might be harmful to their future life, the Truth certainly would not have said: 'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.'³⁷

Perhaps, however, someone is foolish enough to argue that, on the one hand, those who slay the body are not to be feared before death, lest they slay the body, but that, on the other, they are to be feared after death lest they will not permit the body, now slain, to be buried. What Christ says is false, then – 'Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do'³⁸ – if they can, after all, do such great harm to our corpses. God forbid that what the Truth has said should be thought false! Those who kill the body are said to have accomplished something only because there is sensation in the body when they kill it. Afterwards, however, they have nothing that they can do, because there is no sensation in a dead body. There are, then, many Christian bodies not covered by the earth; but no one has separated them from Heaven, nor from the earth which is wholly filled with the presence of Him Who knows whence He will raise that which He has created.

It is, indeed, said in the psalm: 'The dead bodies of Thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of Thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was none to bury

³⁴ Luke 16,19ff.

³⁵ Cf. Psalm 79,2.

³⁶ Cf. Matt. 10,30; Luke, 21,18.

³⁷ Matt. 10,28.

³⁸ Luke 12,4.

them.³⁹ This, however, was said in order to give emphasis to the cruelty of those who did these things rather than to the misery of those who suffered them. For though, in the sight of men, these things may seem hard and dire, 'precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints'.⁴⁰ Therefore, the care bestowed upon the ceremony of burial, the place of interment, the procession of mourners: all these things are done more to comfort the living than to aid the dead. If a costly burial were of any benefit to the ungodly, then a cheap one, or none at all, would harm the godly. His retinue of servants furnished for the purple-clad Dives a funeral magnificent in the sight of men. But far more glorious in the sight of God was that given to the poor man with his sores by the angels who bore him not to a marble tomb, but to the bosom of Abraham.⁴¹

Those against whom I have undertaken the defence of the City of God laugh at these things; but even their own philosophers deem it contemptible to bestow care upon a funeral. And often whole armies, as they died for the soil of their fatherland, cared not where they were to lie afterwards, or for what beasts they might be food. In this matter, we may applaud the poets when they say, 'His covering is the sky who has no urn.'⁴² Our adversaries, therefore, have no reason to make unburied bodies an occasion for mocking the Christians. For the Christians have been promised that this fallen flesh shall be restored not only from the earth, but from the most secret heart of the other elements into which it has passed away: that it shall be given back and made whole in a moment of time.⁴³

13 The reasons for burying the bodies of the saints

The bodies of the departed should not, however, on this account be held in contempt and cast aside: least of all those of the righteous and faithful, of which the Spirit has made holy use as the instruments and vessels of all good works. For if a father's garment or ring or something of the kind is precious to his children in proportion as their parents are loved, their actual bodies, which we wear far more

³⁹ Psalm 79,2f.

⁴⁰ Psalm 115,16.

⁴¹ Luke 16,22.

⁴² Lucan, *Pharsal.*, 7,819.

⁴³ Cf. 1 Cor. 15,52.

intimately and closely than any garment, should certainly not be despised. For they are not an ornament, or employed as an external aid; rather, they belong to the very nature of man. To the righteous men of old, therefore, the last offices were rendered with pious care, and obsequies celebrated and sepulchres provided, while they themselves, when alive, gave instructions to their sons for the burial and disposal of their bodies. Tobit also, as the angel attests, is commended because he had won God's favour by burying the dead.⁴⁴ Even the Lord Himself, though He was to rise again on the third day, praises, and commends to our praise, the good deed of the pious woman who poured precious ointment over His limbs, and who did this against His burial.⁴⁵ And those who received His body from the Cross and lovingly saw to it that it was wrapped and buried with honour are also commemorated in the Gospel with praise.⁴⁶

These instances certainly do not show that any sensation inheres in dead bodies. They do, however, show that the providence of God, to Whom such pious offices are pleasing because they signify the increase of our faith in the resurrection, extends even to the bodies of the dead. Here also, we may learn to our advantage how great must be our reward for the alms which we bestow upon those who have life and sensation, if God does not overlook even those offices lovingly bestowed upon the limbs of lifeless men. Moreover, there are also other places where the holy patriarchs, speaking of the burial and removal of their bodies, desired that their words should be understood in a spirit of prophecy;⁴⁷ but this is not the place to treat of such things, for what we have said is enough.

As we know, the lack of those things necessary to sustain the living, such as food and clothing, does not undermine in good men the strength of their endurance and patience, even though such lack is a grave affliction. Nor does it blot out piety from the soul; on the contrary, it renders it all the more fruitful by cultivation. How much less, then, does the lack of those funereal and burial rites customarily performed for the bodies of the departed make miserable those who are already at rest in the hidden abodes of the godly!

⁴⁴ Tobit 2,7; 12,12.

⁴⁵ Matt. 26,6ff.

⁴⁶ John 19,38ff.

⁴⁷ Gen. 49,29; 50,25

And, by the same token, if such rites were not performed for the bodies of those Christians who fell in the sack of that great city – or, indeed, of any city – this is a matter neither of blame to the living who could not provide them, nor of pain to the dead who could not feel the want of them.

14 Of the captivity of the saints, who never lacked divine consolation

But many Christians, they say, were also led into captivity. This, to be sure, would be a great misery, if they could have been led away anywhere where they did not find their God. But in the Holy Scriptures there are great consolations for this calamity also. The three young men were in captivity; Daniel was;⁴⁸ other prophets were; but God, the Comforter, did not fail them. So also, He has not forsaken His faithful people under the dominion of a nation which, though barbarian, is nonetheless human, just as He did not desert the prophet in the belly of the whale.⁴⁹ Our adversaries would rather laugh at these things than believe them, even though, from their own written accounts, they believe that Arion of Methymna, that sublime lute player, when he was thrown overboard from a ship, was received onto the back of a dolphin and borne ashore. They find that tale of ours about the prophet Jonah more unbelievable: plainly, more unbelievable because more marvellous, and more marvellous because evidence of a greater power.

15 Of Regulus, in whom we have an instance of the willing endurance of captivity for the sake of religion, which, however, could bring him no profit as a worshipper of the gods

Even among their own famous men, however, they have a most noble instance of the willing endurance of captivity for the sake of religion. Marcus Regulus, a general of the Roman people, was taken prisoner by the Carthaginians. But the Carthaginians wished rather to secure the return of their own people than to make captives of

⁴⁸ Dan. 3, 12ff; 1, 6ff

⁴⁹ Jonah 2, 1.

their enemy's; and so, to achieve this end, they sent this Regulus back to Rome at the head of their own legation. But they first bound him by oath that, if he failed to accomplish what they desired, he would return to Carthage. He went, and in the Senate persuaded them to take the opposite course, because he did not judge it advantageous to the Roman commonwealth to exchange prisoners. After so persuading them, he was not compelled by his own people to return to the enemy; but, having sworn to do so, he fulfilled his oath willingly. Moreover, the Carthaginians put him to death with inventive and horrible tortures. They shut him up in a narrow box, in which he was forced to stand. This was everywhere pierced through with exceedingly sharp spikes, so that he could not lean on any part of it without the most atrocious pain; and so they killed him by keeping him awake.

Rightly indeed do the Romans praise a virtue greater than such great misfortune. But the gods by whom Regulus swore were the same as those who are now thought to have inflicted calamities upon the human race for prohibiting their worship. And these gods were worshipped precisely so that they might render this life prosperous! If, then, they either willed or permitted such suffering to be inflicted upon one who kept his oath to them, what worse penalty could they impose in anger upon one who dishonoured such an oath?

Why, therefore, should I not draw a dual conclusion from my argument? Regulus was so conscientious in his worship of the gods that he would neither remain in his own country nor go anywhere else, but did not in the least hesitate to return to his bitterest foes, because he had sworn an oath. If, on the one hand, he thought that this would bring him benefit in this life, he was beyond doubt mistaken, for it earned him a horrible death. Indeed, by his example he taught that the gods bring no temporal felicity to those who worship them. For he, though devoted to their worship, was nonetheless defeated and led away captive, and then tortured to death by a new, hitherto unheard-of and excessively horrible punishment. And this happened to him because he refused to do other than what he had sworn by them to do! If, on the other hand, the worship of the gods does indeed bring happiness as its reward, but only after this life, why do men needlessly bewail the present Chris-

tian times? Why do they say that this calamity has fallen upon the city of Rome because she has ceased to worship her gods? For no matter how diligently she worshipped them, she might still have been just as unfortunate as Regulus was. Or will someone oppose the most manifest truth with such madness and amazing blindness as to dare to contend that, whereas one man can be unfortunate even though he worships the gods, this cannot happen to a whole city? In other words, will anyone suggest that the power of the gods is better able to protect many men than a single individual, even though a multitude is made up of individuals?

If, however, our adversaries say that M. Regulus, even while in captivity and suffering torture of the body, could still have been happy in the blessedness of a virtuous soul, then let us also seek such true virtue: a virtue by which a city also may be made happy, as well as a single man. The happiness of a city and of a man do not, after all, arise from different sources; for a city is nothing other than a concordant multitude of men. For the time being, however, I do not wish to discuss the quality of the virtue that was in Regulus. It is enough, now, that our adversaries are compelled by this most noble example to admit that it is not, after all, for the sake of bodily goods, or for the sake of those things which come to men from without, that the gods are to be worshipped; for Regulus preferred to be without all such things rather than offend the gods by whom he had sworn.

What, then, are we to make of men who glory in having such a citizen, yet fear to have such a city? If they do not fear this, then let them confess that what befell Regulus can also happen to a city which worships the gods as diligently as he did; and let them therefore not reproach the Christian age. Since, however, our discussion began with those Christians who were also made captives, let those who impudently and foolishly mock our most wholesome religion consider the example of Regulus and hold their peace. He worshipped the gods diligently, and faithfully kept the oath that he had sworn by them; yet he was deprived of the only fatherland he had, and suffered in captivity a lingering death by cruel torture at the hands of his enemies: and our adversaries do not consider that their gods are disgraced by this. Still less, then, should the name of Christian be reproached with the captivity of its servants, who,

awaiting a heavenly fatherland with true faith, know that they are pilgrims even in their own habitations.⁵⁰

**16 Whether the violation suffered in captivity by
consecrated virgins could defile their virtue of soul
even though their will did not consent**

Again, our adversaries imagine themselves to be charging Christians with a great crime when, enlarging upon the theme of captivity, they add also the violations committed not only upon married women and maidens intending to marry, but also upon certain consecrated virgins. Here, however, although our discussion is forced into the narrow space between modesty and reason, we say that neither faith, nor godliness, nor that virtue which is called chastity, is really at stake.

But we are not here so much concerned to return an answer to outsiders as to bring comfort to our own people. In the first place, then, let this be stated and affirmed: that the virtue by which life is lived rightly has its seat in the soul; that it directs the members of the body from there; that the body is made holy by the exercise of a holy will; and that, while this will remains unshaken and steadfast, nothing that another does with the body, or in the body, that the sufferer has no power to avert without sinning in turn, is the fault of the sufferer. Not only the infliction of pain, but also the gratification of lust, is possible upon the body of another; but when anything of this kind is done, the chastity to which the most resolute soul holds fast is not struck down. It may be, however, that shame bursts in nonetheless, for fear that someone will think that an act which, perhaps, could not have been undergone without some bodily pleasure occurred with the consent of the mind also.

**17 Of suicide committed through fear of punishment
or dishonour**

What person of human feeling, then, would refuse to forgive those women who for this reason slew themselves rather than suffer in

⁵⁰ Cf. Heb. 11, 13.

such a way? And as for those who refused to slay themselves, lest they avoid the crime of another only by a sin of their own: whoever makes that a matter of reproach to them will not himself escape the charge of foolishness. For if it is not lawful for a private person on his own authority to slay even a guilty man whose death has not been authorised by any law, certainly he who slays himself is also a murderer; and the more innocent he was of that for which he thought he ought to die, the more guilty is he when he kills himself. We rightly detest what Judas did; but the judgment of truth is that, when he hanged himself, he increased rather than expiated the guilt of that accursed betrayal. For though he was penitent at death, he left himself no room for wholesome repentance when he despaired of the mercy of God. If this is so, then, how much more should he who has no sin in him to be punished by such means refrain from killing himself! For Judas, when he slew himself, slew a wicked man; but he ended this life guilty not only of Christ's death, but of his own also. For though he killed himself for his own crime, killing himself was another crime. Why, then, should a man who has done no harm do harm to himself and, in slaying himself, slay an innocent man so as not to suffer the crime of another? Why should he perpetrate upon himself a sin of his own so that another's sin might not be perpetrated on him?

18 Of the violence and lust of others endured by a helpless body while the mind is unwilling

There is, however, the fear that lust will defile even when it is another's. It will not defile, if it is another's; and if it defiles, it is not another's. Modesty is a virtue of the soul, and has as its companion a fortitude which resolves to endure any evil whatsoever rather than consent to evil. But no one, no matter how high-minded and modest, has power to control what is done to the flesh, but only what the mind will consent to or refuse. Who of sane mind, therefore, will suppose that purity is lost if it so happens that the flesh is seized and overpowered, and another's lust exercised and satisfied on it? If purity can perish in this way, then purity certainly is not a virtue of the soul, nor does it belong among those good things whereby life is lived well. Rather, it will be numbered among the good things of the body, such as strength, beauty, health and so

forth. These are indeed good things; but, if they are diminished, this fact does not at all diminish a good and just life. If purity is something of this kind, then, why strive to avert its loss even when the body itself is thereby endangered? If, however, it is a good of the soul, then it is not lost when the body is conquered. On the contrary, when the good of holy continence does not yield to the impurity of fleshly lusts, it sanctifies the body itself. Therefore, when such continence remains unshaken in its intention not to yield, the holiness of the body is itself not destroyed, because the will to use the body in a holy fashion persists and, as far as in it lies, so also does the power.

Also, the holiness of the body does not lie in the integrity of its intimate parts, nor in the fact that they are not defiled by touch. For in various circumstances they sustain injuries, and sometimes physicians, in ministering to bodily health, perform operations on them which are dreadful to behold. If, for instance, a midwife, while examining with her hand the maidenhead of some young woman, has, through malice or clumsiness or accident, destroyed it while handling it, I do not suppose that anyone is so foolish as to deem that the young woman has lost any part of her body's holiness merely because the integrity of this part is now lost. For while the mind retains the firmness of purpose by virtue of which the body itself deserves to be called holy, the violence of another's lust does not take away the body's holiness, which is preserved by the perseverance of the mind.

Again, suppose that some female, already corrupted in mind, violating the pledge which she has vowed to God, is going to meet her seducer, to be debauched. Do we say that, while she is on her way there, she is still holy in body even though the sanctity of mind by which the body is made holy is already lost and destroyed? God forbid such error! Rather, let us learn from this instance that, on the one hand, sanctity of body is not lost while sanctity of mind remains, even if the body is overpowered; whereas, on the other, sanctity of body is indeed lost when the sanctity of the mind is violated, even if the body remains intact. A woman who has been overcome by violence and violated by the sin of another, therefore, has done nothing for which she ought to punish herself with voluntary death. Still less ought she to do so before the event; for let not

the certain guilt of murder be incurred while an outrage which is not even her own yet remains uncertain.

19 Of Lucretia, who slew herself because she was ravished

With clear reason, then, do we say that, when a woman's body is overpowered but the intention to remain chaste persists nonetheless, and is unaltered by any consent to evil, the crime belongs only to the man who violated her by force. It does not belong to the woman who, forced to submit to violation, did not consent to it by any act of will. Can it be that those against whom we are defending as holy not only the minds, but also the bodies, of the Christian women who were ravished while in captivity will dare to contradict this? Certainly, they extol with great praise the modesty of Lucretia, that noble woman of ancient Rome. When the son of Tarquin the king overcame her with violence and lustfully enjoyed her body, she made known the crime of that most deplorable young man to her husband Collatinus and her kinsman Brutus. These were men of the highest distinction and courage, whom she adjured to avenge her. Then, sick with the shame of what had been done to her, and unable to bear it, she slew herself. What shall we say? Should she be judged an adulteress or a chaste woman? Who can think it worthwhile to argue over such a question? A certain person, reciting this story with distinction and veracity, says: 'Marvellous to relate, there were two people, but only one of them committed adultery.'⁵¹ Splendidly and truly said! He, contemplating in this intermingling of bodies an entirely shameful lust on the one side, and an entirely chaste will on the other, and considering not the union of their members, but the separateness of their minds, says that 'there were two people, but only one of them committed adultery'.

How does it come about, then, that the one who did not commit adultery was the more severely punished? For Sextus was expelled from the fatherland with his father; Lucretia, however, was smitten with the supreme penalty. If it was not through any impurity on her part that she was taken against her will, then it was not justice

⁵¹ The source of this quotation is not known.

by which, being innocent, she was punished. I appeal to you, O laws and judges of Rome. Even after the commission of crimes you do not allow a wicked man to be executed uncondemned. If, therefore, anyone were to bring this case before your tribunal, and it were proved to you that a woman had been put to death not only uncondemned, but also chaste and innocent, would you not punish one who had done this with fitting severity? Lucretia, however – she who is so celebrated – did exactly this: she slew the innocent and chaste Lucretia, who had, moreover, suffered violence. Pronounce sentence, then; and if you cannot do so because she does not appear before you to be punished, why, at any rate, do you praise with such eloquence the murderess of an innocent and chaste woman? Certainly, you will have no arguments with which to defend her against those judges of the infernal regions of whom your poets sing in their verses. For she is plainly numbered among those who, ‘though innocent, laid deadly hands upon themselves, hating the light, and threw away their souls’.⁵² And if they long to return to the overworld, ‘Fate bars the way, and the dismal swamp’s unlovely pools confine them.’⁵³

But is she, perhaps, not, after all, among the number of those who have slain themselves even though innocent? Did she, perhaps, slay herself because she was conscious not of innocence, but of guilt? What if – and only she could know this – even though the young man threw himself upon her with violence, she herself consented, seduced by her own lust? And what if she was then so stricken by remorse that, in seeking to punish herself, she thought that death was the only expiation? Even in this case, she should not have slain herself if it was possible to do penance which might bear fruit with her false gods.

If this was indeed the case, and it is false that ‘there were two people and only one of them committed adultery’; if, rather, both committed adultery, the one by visible assault and the other by hidden assent: then she did not slay herself innocent. Her learned defenders can therefore say that she is not in the infernal regions among those who ‘though innocent, laid deadly hands upon themselves’. But then the case is reduced to a dilemma. For if she is

⁵² Virgil, *Aen.*, 6,434ff.

⁵³ *Aen.*, 6,438ff.

acquitted of murder, she is convicted of adultery; and if she is acquitted of adultery, then she is convicted of murder. It is not possible to find a way out of this dilemma. One can only ask: If she was an adulteress, why is she praised? If she was pure, why was she slain?

Our purpose, however, is to refute those who, far removed from any understanding of holiness, reproach those Christian women who were outraged in captivity. For us, therefore, it is enough that, in the case of this noble lady, it is well said in her praise that 'there were two people, but only one of them committed adultery'. For the Romans prefer to believe that Lucretia was not one who could have soiled herself by consenting to adultery. In that case, therefore, when she slew herself because she had endured the act of an adulterer even though she was not an adulteress herself, she did this not from love of purity, but because of a weakness arising from shame. She was made ashamed by the infamy of another, even though committed against her without her consent. Being a Roman lady excessively eager for praise, she feared that, if she remained alive, she would be thought to have enjoyed suffering the violence that she had suffered when she lived. Hence, she judged that she must use self-punishment to exhibit the state of her mind to the eyes of men to whom she could not show her conscience. She blushed, indeed, to think that, if she were to bear patiently the infamy that another had inflicted upon her, she would be believed to have been an accomplice to it.

But this is not what those Christian women did who suffered in the same way yet are still alive. They did not avenge another's crime upon themselves; and it was because they feared adding to the crime of others a crime of their own that they did not do so. For this is what they would have done if, when their enemies committed rape on them out of lust, they had committed murder on themselves out of shame. Within themselves, indeed, by the testimony of their own conscience, they have the glory of chastity. Moreover, they have it in the sight of God, and they require nothing more. They intend no more than to do right, without straying from the authority of the divine law by doing wrong to avoid the scandal of human suspicion.

20 That there is no authority which extends to
Christians the right to die of their own will in any
circumstances whatsoever

It is not without significance that, in the holy canonical books, no divine precept or permission can be discovered which allows us to bring about our own death, either to obtain immortality or to avert or avoid some evil. On the contrary, we must understand the Law of God as forbidding us to do this, where it says, 'Thou shalt not kill.'⁵⁴ This is especially so given that it does not here add 'thy neighbour', as it does when it forbids false witness. It says, 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.'⁵⁵ No one, however, should consider himself innocent of this crime if he has borne false witness only against himself; for he who loves his neighbour has received a rule under which he must love himself also. For it is indeed written: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'⁵⁶ Thus, a man is no less guilty of false witness if he testifies falsely only against himself than if he does so against his neighbour; and this is so even though, in that commandment where false witness is prohibited, only false witness against a neighbour is forbidden. It might seem that it is not forbidden for someone to bear false witness against himself; but only to those who do not understand the matter rightly. Still more, then, must we understand that a man is not permitted to kill himself, since, when it is written, 'Thou shalt not kill', nothing is then added to this commandment, and no one – not even the person to whom the commandment is addressed – is seen to be excepted.

Hence, some persons endeavour to extend this commandment even to beasts and cattle, and maintain that it is not lawful to kill any of them either. Why, therefore, not also include plants and whatever else is rooted in the soil and fed by it? For things of this kind also are said to live, even though they have no sensation. By the same token, they can also die, and, consequently, when force is applied to them, be slain. The apostle himself, when he speaks of seeds of this kind, says: 'That which thou sowest is not quickened

⁵⁴ Exod. 20,13.

⁵⁵ Exod. 20,16.

⁵⁶ Matt. 22,39.

except it die.⁵⁷ And in the psalm it is written: 'He killed their vines with hail.'⁵⁸ Do we, then, when we hear 'Thou shalt not kill', for this reason conclude that it is wicked to pull up a weed, and acquiesce in the most senseless error of the Manichaeans? Let us leave these maunderings aside, however. When we read 'Thou shalt not kill', we are not to take this commandment as applying to plants, for these have no sensation. Nor does it apply to the non-rational animals which fly, swim, walk or crawl, for these do not share the use of reason with us. It is not given to them to have it in common with us; and, for this reason, by the most just ordinance of their Creator, both their life and death are subject to our needs.⁵⁹ What remains, then, is this: that, when it is said, 'Thou shalt not kill', we must understand this as applying to man, and hence to mean 'neither another nor thyself'; for he who kills himself kills what is no other than a man.

21 Of those cases of homicide which do not incur the guilt of murder

But the divine authority itself has made certain exceptions to the rule that it is not lawful to kill men. These exceptions, however, include only those whom God commands to be slain, either by a general law, or by an express command applying to a particular person at a particular time. Moreover, he who is commanded to perform this ministry does not himself slay. Rather, he is like a sword which is the instrument of its user. And so those who, by God's authority, have waged wars, or who, bearing the public power in their own person, have punished the wicked with death according to His laws, that is, by His most just authority: these have in no way acted against that commandment which says, 'Thou shalt not kill.' Abraham, indeed, was not only exonerated from the guilt of cruelty, but was even praised in the name of piety; for, in resolving to slay his son, he acted not in the least wickedly, but in obedience to a command.⁶⁰ And it may rightly be asked whether it was also

⁵⁷ 1 Cor. 15,36.

⁵⁸ Psalm 78,47.

⁵⁹ Cf. Gen. 1,28ff.

⁶⁰ Gen. 22,2ff.

by God's command that Jephthah slew his daughter, who ran to meet her father when he had vowed that he would sacrifice to God whatever first met him as he returned victorious from battle.⁶¹ Nor is Samson, who crushed himself and his foes together when he brought about the collapse of the house, excused other than by the fact that the Spirit Who had been performing miracles through him secretly commanded him to do this.⁶² With the exception, however, of those who slay under a just general law or by the special command of God, Who is the fount of justice, he who kills a man – whether himself or anyone else – is implicated in the crime of murder.

22 Whether voluntary death can ever be a sign of greatness of soul

But perhaps those who have perpetrated this crime upon themselves, though not to be praised for the soundness of their wisdom, are nonetheless to be admired for their greatness of soul? If you consider the nature of the case more carefully, you will hardly call it greatness of soul which leads someone to do away with himself because he cannot manage to bear hardships of some kind, or the sins of others. On the contrary, the soul is seen to be weak if it cannot bear either the harsh servitude of its own body or the foolish opinion of the vulgar. We might more properly call a soul great if it can bear a life full of calamity and not flee from it, and if it can in the light of a pure conscience hold human judgment in contempt: especially the judgment of the vulgar, which is so commonly wrapped in the darkness of error.

If it is to be considered a great-souled act for a man to put himself to death, however, then such greatness certainly resided in the soul of that Cleombrotus who (the story goes), when he had read the book of Plato in which the immortality of the soul is discussed, cast himself headlong from a wall, and so departed this life for that which he believed to be a better. He was not prompted to do this by any calamity or crime, either real or imagined, which he could not manage to bear and so made away with himself. Rather, only

⁶¹ Judg. 11,29ff.

⁶² Judg. 16,28ff.

his 'greatness of soul' sustained him as he eagerly embraced death and burst the sweet bonds of this life. Yet Plato himself, whom he had read, could have told him that he acted greatly rather than well. For Plato, of all people, surely would have been the first to act in the same way had he not, with that mind with which he had seen the soul's immortality, also perceived that this should not be done: and should, indeed, be forbidden.

Again, many have killed themselves for fear of falling into the hands of an enemy: we are not here asking whether this has been done, but whether it should have been done. Sound reason is certainly to be preferred to examples; but, in this case, the examples are in harmony with reason, and the more excellent in godliness they are, the more worthy are they of emulation. The patriarchs did not do it; the prophets did not do it. Nor did the apostles; for, otherwise, the Lord Jesus Christ, instead of admonishing them that, if they suffered persecution, they should 'flee from city to city',⁶³ would have taught them to lay hands on themselves for fear of falling into the hands of persecutors. Given, then, that He did not command or admonish them to depart this life in such a fashion, even though He had promised that He would prepare eternal mansions for them against their departure,⁶⁴ it is obvious that, whatever examples are proposed by 'the nations that forget God',⁶⁵ this is not lawful for those who worship the one true God.

23 What of the example of Cato, who slew himself because he could not bear Caesar's victory?

Apart from Lucretia, however, of whom we seem already to have said enough, those who counsel suicide do not easily find an example to put forward as an authority, unless it be that Cato who slew himself at Utica. He was not, of course, the only one who did so. He was, however, a man of such learning and probity that anyone might fairly think that his act could have been, and can be, rightly done. What can I say of this act, then, other than that certain of his friends, also learned men, but more prudent ones, tried to

⁶³ Matt. 10,23.

⁶⁴ John 14,2.

⁶⁵ 1 Thess. 4,5.

dissuade him from it? For they deemed suicide more the deed of a foolish spirit than of a proud one: an act demonstrating not honour forestalling villainy, but weakness unable to sustain adversity. Cato himself thought so in the case of his dearly beloved son. For if it was a disgrace to live under the victorious Caesar, why was he the author of such a disgrace to his own son, when he admonished him to place all his hopes in Caesar's generosity?⁶⁶ Why, indeed, did he not compel his son to die with him? If Torquatus was worthy of praise when he slew his son who, even though he had won, had engaged the enemy contrary to what he was commanded to do, why did the vanquished Cato spare his vanquished son when he did not spare himself? Was it more disgraceful to be a victor against orders than to acknowledge a victor against honour? Cato, therefore, cannot, after all, have deemed it a disgrace to live under the victorious Caesar: otherwise, a father's sword would have redeemed his son from such disgrace. What can we say, therefore, other than what Caesar himself is reported to have said: that although Cato greatly loved his son, whom he hoped and wished would be spared by Caesar, still more greatly did he hate – or let us put it more kindly and say blush – to give Caesar the glory of pardoning himself?⁶⁷

24 That in that virtue in which Regulus excelled Cato the Christians are more eminent still

But our adversaries do not wish us to give preference over Cato to that holy man Job, who chose to endure terrible evils in his flesh rather than to be rid of all his sufferings by putting himself to death. Nor do they wish us to prefer those other saints of whom, on the highest authority, it is recorded in our most sublime and faithful books that they chose to bear captivity and enslavement by the enemy rather than to slay themselves. I shall, then, prefer to Marcus Cato that same Marcus Regulus who appears in their own books. For Cato never overcame Caesar, but, being overcome by him, and disdaining to be subject to him, chose to kill himself. Regulus, however, a Roman general with a Roman command, had already

⁶⁶ Dio Cassius, *Hist. Rom.*, 43, 10.

⁶⁷ Plutarch, *Cato*, 72; *Caesar*, 54.

defeated the Carthaginians and brought back not a deplorable victory over his fellow countrymen, but a glorious victory over the enemy; yet afterwards, being defeated by them, he preferred rather to endure servitude under them than to escape it by dying. Accordingly, he remained both patient under the dominion of the Carthaginians and constant in his love of the Romans, neither stealing away his conquered body from his foes nor his unconquered spirit from his countrymen. Nor was it from love of this life that he refused to slay himself. This much he proved when, for the sake of his promise, and because of the oath he had sworn, he returned without hesitation to those same foes whom he had offended more gravely by his words in the Senate than by his feats of arms in battle. Beyond doubt, then, he who held life in such contempt, yet chose to end it in the midst of whatever tortures his enraged enemies might inflict rather than by doing away with himself, deemed it a great crime for a man to slay himself.

Among all their praiseworthy and illustrious men of outstanding virtue, the Romans offer no one better than this man. He was neither corrupted by good fortune, for he remained entirely poor even after his great victories, nor defeated by adversity, for he went back unmoved to so grim an end. But if the bravest and most distinguished men, defenders of an earthly fatherland and of their gods – false gods, certainly; but they were not false worshippers, for they indeed kept their oaths most faithfully: if these could, according to the custom and rule of war, smite their vanquished enemy, yet, when conquered by their enemies, refuse to smite themselves; if these, who did not in the least fear death, preferred to be enslaved by their conquerors rather than to inflict death upon themselves: then how much more will Christians, worshippers of the true God, who aspire to a supernal fatherland, abstain from this crime if by divine providence they are for a season subjugated by their enemies, either to prove or correct them! And they will not be forsaken in this humiliation by the Most High, Who for their sakes so humbled Himself. After all, they are bound by no military authority, nor by an oath of military service, to smite even a conquered enemy. Who is so grievously in error, then, as to suppose that a man may kill himself because a foe has sinned against him, or for fear that a foe may sin against him, yet may not kill the foe himself who has sinned, or will in the future sin, against him?

25 That sin may not be avoided by sin

But we must, they say, fear and beware lest the body, when overpowered by an enemy's lust, tempt the soul by a most enticing pleasure to consent to the sin. And it is for this reason, they say, that we ought to kill ourselves: not, now, because of the sin of another, but because of our own sin, even though no one has yet committed it. But the soul which is subject to God and His wisdom rather than to the body and its desire will by no means act so as to consent to the lust of the flesh because aroused by the lust of another. In any case, if it is also a detestable crime and a damnable wickedness for a man to slay himself, as the truth manifestly proclaims, who is so foolish as to say, 'Let us sin now, lest perhaps we sin later; let us now commit murder, for fear that we may later happen to commit adultery'? If we are so dominated by wickedness that we can choose only to commit sins rather than to perform innocent acts, is not a future and uncertain adultery at any rate better than a certain and present murder? Is it not better to commit an act of wickedness which penitence may heal than a crime such that no room is left for wholesome repentance? I say this for the sake of those men or women who consider that they should do themselves mortal violence in order to avoid not another's sin, but their own, for fear that they will otherwise consent because their own lust has been excited by that of another. Never let it be said that the Christian who trusts in God and, placing his hope in Him, leans upon His aid: never let it be said, I say, that such a mind will yield shameful consent to any pleasures of the flesh whatsoever. To be sure, that lustful disobedience which still dwells in our dying members sometimes moves itself as if by its own law, apart from the law of our will: when we are asleep, for instance. In this case also, however, there is still no guilt in the body of one who does not consent.

26 Of those things which ought not to be done which are nonetheless known to have been done by the saints; and what we are to believe as to their reasons for doing them

But, they say, in the time of persecution certain holy women, in order to escape those who might abuse their purity, hurled them-

selves into a river which bore them away and drowned them, and in that way died.⁶⁸ Moreover, their martyrdom is celebrated with veneration by great numbers in the Catholic Church. Of these women I do not venture any casual judgment. For I do not know if the Divine Authority has, by some trustworthy testimonies, persuaded the Church so to honour their memories; and it may be that this is so. For what if they did this thing not because they were deceived by human frailty, but by divine command, and so were not in error, but obedient? – as in the story of Samson, which it would be wickedness in us not to believe. For when God gives a command and shows without any ambiguity that it is His command, who will call obedience a crime? Who will reproach the submission of godliness? It is, of course, not done without wickedness if someone resolves to sacrifice his son to God merely because Abraham was praiseworthy in so doing. But when the soldier, obedient to the power under which he has been lawfully placed, slays a man, he is not guilty of murder according to any laws of his city. On the contrary, if he does not do so, he is guilty of desertion and contempt of authority. If he had done this of his own will and authority, however, he would have fallen into the crime of shedding human blood. Thus, the deed which is punished if he does it when not commanded is the same as that for which he will be punished if he does not do it when commanded. And if this is true when the command is given by a general, how much more true is it when the command is given by the Creator! He, therefore, who knows that it is not lawful to kill himself, may nonetheless do so if commanded by Him Whose commands it is not lawful to despise. Let him be sure, however, that the divine command is not made uncertain by any doubt.

It is through the car, then, that we become aware of the conscience of others: we do not presume to judge those things which are hidden from us. No one ‘knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him’.⁶⁹ But this we say; this we assert; this we in all ways approve: that no man ought voluntarily to inflict

⁶⁸ Augustine probably has in mind the story of the Christian lady of Antioch, Domnina, and her two daughters, who, captured during the persecution of Diocletian, drowned themselves to avoid compromising their chastity. The story is in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*, 8,12. He may also be thinking of the similar story of St Pelagia, who threw herself off the roof of her house to avoid rape, and whose heroism is praised by St Ambrose, *De virg.*, 3,7.

⁶⁹ 1 Cor. 2,11.

death upon himself, for this is to flee from temporal ills by falling into eternal ones. No one ought to do this because of the sins of another, lest, by doing so, he who would not have been defiled by another's sin incur the gravest guilt of his own. Again, no one ought to do so because of his own past sins, for he has all the more need of this life so that these sins may be healed by repentance. Finally, no one ought to do so out of desire for the better life which is hoped for after death, for that better life which comes after death does not receive those who are guilty of their own death.

27 Whether voluntary death is to be sought in order to avoid sin

There remains one reason, of which I had begun to speak, for supposing that it may be beneficial for someone to slay himself: namely, for fear of falling into sin either through the enticement of pleasure or the violence of pain. If we decide to admit this reason, however, it will carry us to the extent of thinking that men should be exhorted to kill themselves as soon as they have been washed in the font of holy regeneration and have received the forgiveness of all sins.⁷⁰ For the time to avoid all future sin, surely, is when all past sins have been blotted out; and if this can be rightly achieved by voluntary death, then why not by all means seek it?

On this view, then: why does anyone, once baptised, spare himself? Why, once set free, does he thrust his head back into the perils of this life, when he has the power to rid himself of them all so easily? For it is written: 'He who loveth danger shall fall into it.'⁷¹ Why, then, are so many and such grave dangers loved – or, if not loved, at least accepted – by those who remain in this life even though they might lawfully withdraw from it? Is there any heart so ruined by foolish perversity, and so turned aside from the contemplation of truth, as to think that, on the one hand, a man ought to do away with himself to avoid falling into sin if he is the prisoner of one oppressor, but that he ought in other circumstances to live, and so bear to the end the hourly temptations of this world: both those which threaten men who are under one oppressor and the

⁷⁰ Cf. Titus 3,5.

⁷¹ Eccclus. 3,26.

numberless others without which this life cannot be conducted? Why should we spend time on those exhortations by which we strive to persuade the baptised to embrace either virginal chastity, or the continence of widowhood, or the fidelity of the marriage bed, when we have a way which is so much better and more profitable of delivering ourselves from all sins? Let us, then, persuade whomever we can to lay hold of death as soon as possible after the remission of their sins, and inflict it upon themselves, and so send themselves to the Lord whole and pure.

Clearly, if anyone were really to suppose that we should undertake, or persuade others to undertake, such a thing, he would be not merely foolish, but mad. Is it, then, not impudent for someone say to a man, 'Living, as you do, under an oppressor with the shameless morals of a barbarian, you should kill yourself, for fear of adding to your little sins a more serious one'? How can anyone rightly say this if he cannot without the greatest wickedness say, 'Kill yourself, now that you are absolved of all your sins. Kill yourself, lest you commit the same or even worse sins while you live in the world: in a world with such a power to tempt by its impure pleasures, to enrage by its horrible cruelties, and to set at odds with its errors and terrors'? If it is wicked to say this, then surely it is also wicked to slay oneself. If there could be any just reason at all for doing so, surely there could be none more just than this. But since not even this reason is just, then none is.

28 By what judgment of God the enemy was permitted to sin against the bodies of the chaste

Let not your lives be a burden to you, then, O faithful ones of Christ, even if your chastity has been made sport of by your enemies. You have a great and true consolation if you retain an honest conscience because you did not consent to the sins of those who were permitted to sin against you. And if you should ask why they were permitted to do so: deep indeed is the providence of the Creator and Ruler of the world, and 'unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out'.⁷²

⁷² Rom. 11,33.

Question your souls faithfully, however, lest perhaps you have been too puffed up by the good of maidenhood or chastity or purity, and lest you take such delight in human praise that you have indeed begrudged others this same good. I do not accuse where I do not know, nor do I hear what your hearts reply when you question them. But if their answer were to be Yes, then do not wonder at it that you have lost that virginity by which you sought to please men, even while retaining that purity which cannot be shown to men. If you did not consent to those who sinned, this was because divine assistance was added to divine grace, lest grace be lost. But if human glory has now given place to human condemnation, this is only so that such glory should not be loved. In both cases, O faint-hearted ones, be consoled: you are on the one hand approved and justified, and on the other chastised and corrected.

There are, however, those whose hearts, when questioned, reply that they never were unduly proud of the good of virginity or widowhood or conjugal purity: that, 'condescending to men of low estate',⁷³ they rejoiced with trembling⁷⁴ in the gift of God, and never begrudged anyone else an equal excellence of holiness and chastity. Not caring for human praise, which is usually bestowed more lavishly in proportion as the goodness which prompts it is rare, they have desired rather that their number should increase than that they should be eminent by reason of their scarcity. But let not such women, even if the lust of the barbarians was forced upon some of them, bewail the fact that this was permitted. Let them not believe that God is neglectful of them because, in their case, He has permitted a sin which no one normally commits with impunity. For it may be that some of the heaviest loads of guilty lust are overlooked by the hidden judgment of God at present, yet reserved to a last and visible judgment. Moreover, it may be that these women, even though of good conscience because they did not allow their hearts to be swollen with pride in the virtue of chastity, nonetheless possessed some latent infirmity which might have grown up into the arrogance of pride had they escaped this humiliation during the sack. Perhaps this, then, is why they suffered the violation of their flesh by the enemy. Just as some men were snatched away by death

⁷³ Rom. 12, 16.

⁷⁴ Psalm 2, 11.

'lest wickedness should change their understanding',⁷⁵ so also it may be that certain of these women were outraged lest good fortune should change their humility. In the case of both, therefore – those who took pride in the fact that their flesh had never suffered the touch of shame, and those who might have begun to take such pride had they not been violently defiled by the enemy – their chastity was not diminished, but their humility strengthened. The former were treated for a tumour that had already grown; the latter were warned of a tumour about to grow.

But we should not omit to mention that some of those who suffered may have supposed that continence is a bodily good like any other, and therefore that it endures only for as long as the body is not subject to anyone else's lustful handling. The truth, however, is that sanctity of body and spirit alike depend solely upon the strength of a will assisted by divine aid, and that continence is therefore a good which cannot be taken away for as long as the mind does not consent. Perhaps, then, we have now relieved them of their error. Let them therefore reflect that they have served God with a good conscience. Let them remember that He will in no way forsake those who serve and call upon Him. And let them not forget how greatly chastity pleases Him. Then, they will realise that He would never have allowed these misfortunes to befall His saints if that holiness which He has given to them, and which He loves to see in them, could thereby in any degree perish.

29 What answer Christ's servants should make to the unbelievers when they complain that Christ did not deliver them from the fury of the enemy

The whole family of the highest and true God, then, has a consolation of its own: a consolation which depends neither upon falsehood nor upon hope in those things which falter and fail. Also, its members have a life in this age which is not in the least to be regretted: a life which is the school of eternity, in which they make use of earthly goods like pilgrims, without grasping after them, and are proved and corrected by evils. As to those who revile them in their righteousness and say to them, when they chance to incur

⁷⁵ Cf. *Wisd.* 4,11.

temporal ills, 'Where is thy God?'⁷⁶ – let these tell us where their own gods are, when they suffer those very things for the avoidance of which they worship those gods, or contend that they ought to be worshipped! For we answer: Our God is present everywhere, wholly everywhere, nowhere confined. He can be present unseen, absent without moving. When He subjects me to adversity, this is either to test my merits or chastise my sins; and He reserves an eternal reward for my pious endurance of temporal ills. But who are you, that we should deign to speak to you even of your own gods, much less of our God, Who 'is to be feared above all gods, for all the gods of the nations are demons, but the Lord made the heavens'?⁷⁷

30 Those who complain of the Christian age wish to live in shameful luxury

What if that Scipio Nasica who was once your pontiff were still alive: he who, during the terror of the Carthaginian war, when a man of the highest qualities was sought, was unanimously chosen by the Senate to bring the sacred objects from Phrygia? He would restrain you from this impudence, and you would hardly dare to look him in the face. For, when afflicted by adversities, do you not complain of the Christian age only because you long to remain secure in your own luxury? Only because you wish to wallow in the most abandoned morals, exempt from all hardship and annoyance? You desire to have peace and all kinds of wealth in abundance. You do not, however, desire to have these goods so that you may use them honestly – that is, modestly, soberly, moderately and with godliness. Rather, you wish to use them to secure an infinite variety of insane pleasures. Thus, you engender from prosperity a plague of moral ills worse than the raging of enemies.

It was because he feared such calamity as this that Scipio, your chief pontiff and the highest of all men in the esteem of the Senate, refused to agree to the destruction of Rome's rival for empire, Carthage, and spoke against Cato, who advised its destruction. For Scipio feared security as the enemy of weak spirits. He saw that fear was necessary to the citizens: to act, as it were, as a suitable

⁷⁶ Psalm 42,3.

⁷⁷ Psalm 96,4.

tutor during their pupillage. Nor was he mistaken in this judgment; for the outcome proved how truly he had spoken. For when Carthage was destroyed and the great terror of the Roman commonwealth thereby repulsed and extinguished, the prosperous condition of things immediately gave rise to great evils. Concord was corrupted and destroyed by fierce and cruel sedition; and then, by a series of evil causes, came the civil wars, which brought great slaughter, bloodshed, and a frenzy of cruel and greedy proscriptions and robberies. Thus, those Romans who, when life had possessed more innocence, feared only the evil deeds of their enemies, now, when the innocence of life was lost, suffered more cruelly at the hands of their fellow citizens. Finally, once it had conquered a few of the mightier men, that lust for mastery which, among the other vices of the human race, belongs in its purest form to the whole Roman people, overcame other men also, worn out and exhausted as they were by the yoke of servitude.

31 By what degrees of vice the desire for rule increased among the Romans

But, once established in the minds of the proudest, how can such lust for mastery rest until, by the usual succession of offices, it has reached the highest power? There would not, indeed, be provision for such a succession of offices were ambition not so powerful. But, then again, ambition itself would not have such force other than among a people corrupted by avarice and luxury. And a people is made greedy and luxurious by that prosperity which Nasica, with his immense foresight, voted to avoid when he refused to allow the greatest and strongest and most opulent city of the enemy to be destroyed. This was so that lust might be restrained by fear; and so that lust, once repressed, should not live in luxury; and so that, luxury forestalled, avarice would cease to lurk; and so that, all these vices being banished, virtue would flourish and increase to the city's benefit, and a liberty consistent with such virtue would endure.

Again, it was from the same eminently prudent love of the fatherland that this very same chief pontiff of yours – who was, as we must often observe, chosen by the Senate of those days, without one dissenting vote, as the best of men: that he, when the Senate was proposing to build a theatre equipped with seats, restrained

them from the inclination and desire to do so. In a most weighty oration⁷⁸ he persuaded them not to allow Greek luxury to steal away the manly habits of the fatherland, nor to permit Roman virtue to be corrupted and undermined by foreign wickedness. And so highly was his authority esteemed that, moved by his words, the Senate straightway forbade even the use of those temporary benches which had begun to be brought into the games for the citizens to use.

Surely, such a man as this would also have banished theatrical displays from the city of Rome, had he only dared to resist the authority of those whom he supposed to be gods! But he did not understand that these gods are noxious demons; or, if he did understand this, he held that they should be appeased rather than condemned. For that sublime doctrine which purifies the heart by faith had not yet been revealed to the nations: that doctrine which directs human affections in humble piety to the pursuit of things heavenly, or more than heavenly, and redeems them from the lordship of proud demons.

32 Of the establishment of stage plays

Know, then, you who are ignorant of this fact, and you who pretend to be ignorant; take note, you who murmur against the Lord Who has redeemed you from such lords: that the theatrical displays by which disgraceful acts and licentious vanity are exhibited were instituted at Rome not by human vice, but at the command of your gods! It would be more tolerable for you to bestow divine honours upon that Scipio than to worship such gods; for the gods were certainly not better than their priest. Behold; listen – if your minds, drunk with imbibing such errors for so long, will allow you a moment of sanity: the gods commanded theatrical performances in order to put an end to a pestilence of the body.⁷⁹ Their priest, however, forbade the building of the theatre in order to prevent a pestilence of the soul! If, then, by any light of the mind you prefer soul to body, choose whom to worship! Moreover, that bodily pestilence did not abate because a warlike people, hitherto accustomed only to the games of the circus, suddenly developed a girlish

⁷⁸ Cf. Livy, 48

⁷⁹ Cf. Livy, 7,2.

enthusiasm for stage plays. Rather, the abominable spirits were cunning enough to see that the pestilence had in any case reached its appointed end and was about to cease, and gladly took the opportunity to introduce another, far graver one, not into the bodies of the Romans but into their morals. In this way, they blinded the minds of their miserable victims with darkness, and sullied them with depravity: so much so that, even after the city of Rome was sacked, those possessed by this pestilence who had been able to flee to Carthage for shelter were to be found in the theatres every day, eagerly raving after the actors! Those who come after us, if they hear this, will no doubt find it hard to believe.

33 Of the vices of the Romans, which were not corrected by the fall of their fatherland

O insane minds! What is this error – or, rather, madness? For, as we have heard,⁸⁰ the peoples of the East and the greatest cities in the uttermost parts of the earth bewailed your fall with public lamentation and mourning – and you looked for theatres! You entered them, filled them, and behaved with even greater madness than before! It was this blemish and curse of your souls, this collapse of probity and honesty, that Scipio feared when he forbade the construction of the theatre, and when he discerned that you would be so easily corrupted and overthrown by prosperity that he did not wish you to be safe against the terror of an enemy. For he did not deem that commonwealth happy whose walls stand but whose morals have fallen. But you valued the seductions of impious demons more than the counsel of provident men. This is why you do not wish to have the evil that you do laid to your charge, and why you lay the evil that you suffer to the charge of the Christian age. You were depraved by the prosperity of your affairs, but you could not be corrected by adversity; and the security that you seek is not a peaceful commonwealth, but unpunished luxury. Scipio wished you to go in fear of an enemy, so that you should not sink into luxury; but even when consumed by an enemy you have not subdued your love of luxury. You have lost the chance of profiting

⁸⁰ Cf. Jerome, *Epist.* 136,2; 127,12.

from calamity, and you have become wholly wretched while still remaining wholly shameful.

34 Of the mercy of God in tempering the City's destruction

Nonetheless, it is thanks to God that you are still alive: to God Who, in sparing you, warns you to correct yourselves by repentance. Ungrateful as you are, He has allowed you to escape the hands of your enemy either under the name of His servants or in the sanctuaries of His martyrs. It is said that when Romulus and Remus sought to increase the population of the city, they established a sanctuary to which any man might flee and be free of all guilt.⁸¹ This was an admirable example, which has now been followed in honour of Christ: the overthrowers of the city have established exactly what her founders established in the beginning. But how can we regard it as a great thing that the latter did this in order to augment the number of their own citizens, when the former did it in order to spare great numbers of their enemies?

35 Of the sons of the Church hidden among the ungodly; and of false Christians within the Church

Let these answers, and others, if more fruitful and fitting ones can be found, be made to their enemies by the redeemed family of the Lord Christ and by the pilgrim city of Christ the King. Remember, however, that among those very enemies are hidden some who will become citizens; and do not think it fruitless to bear their enmity until they shall come to confess the faith. On the other hand, while she is a pilgrim in this world, the City of God has with her, bound to her by the communion of the sacraments, some who will not be with her to share eternally in the bliss of the saints. Some of these are concealed. Some of them, however, join openly with our enemies, and do not hesitate to murmur against the God Whose sacrament they bear. Sometimes they crowd into the theatres with our enemies, and sometimes into the churches with us.

⁸¹ Livy, 1,8

But there is no reason to despair wholly of the correction even of some of these. For among our most declared enemies – unknown even to themselves – there lie hidden some who are predestined to become our friends. In this world, the two cities are indeed entangled and mingled with one another; and they will remain so until the last judgment shall separate them. Of their rise and progress and appointed end, then, I shall now speak, God being my helper. I shall do so as far as I judge it expedient to the glory of the City of God, which will shine all the more brightly when compared with the other city.

36 Of those subjects which are to be discussed in the following discourse

There are, however, still some things that I must say against those who attribute the disasters which have befallen the Roman commonwealth to the fact that our religion has forbidden the offering of sacrifices to the gods. For I must mention as many evils, and as great, as I can, or as shall seem sufficient, which that city, or the provinces belonging to her empire, sustained before those sacrifices were prohibited. There is no doubt that the Romans would have attributed all these evils to us, had our religion by then already shed its light upon them and forbidden their sacrilegious sacrifices.

Next, I must show what their morals were, and why the true God, in Whose power are all kingdoms, deigned to assist the increase of their empire. And I will show moreover that those whom they suppose to be gods did nothing to help them, but, rather, greatly injured them by deceit and fraud. Finally, I shall speak against those who, even though confuted and overcome by the most manifest proof, still strive to assert that the gods should be worshipped not for the sake of benefits in this present life, but for those in a life to come after death. This, if I am not mistaken, will be a much more difficult task, and one much more worthy of subtle disputation. For I shall here be disputing not only with the philosophers, but with those among them who shine with the most illustrious glory and who, in many respects, think as we do on the subject of the soul's immortality, and the true God Who created the world, and the providence by which He rules the universe which He has created. Even these, however, must be refuted in those

matters on which their thinking is at odds with our own. We must not shrink, therefore, from the duty of rebutting the contrary opinions of the ungodly to the best of the ability which God imparts. Then, we shall be able to proclaim the City of God and true godliness and the worship of God, in which alone lies the true promise of eternal blessedness. Here, then, let this book end, so that we may make a new beginning in dealing with these matters.

Book II

I Of the limit which must be set to necessary refutation

With the weakness of understanding common to all mankind, men everywhere presume to resist the clear evidence of truth. If they were to submit that weakness to wholesome doctrine as to a medicine, it would, with divine aid, be healed by the intercession of faith and godliness. Then, men of right understanding would have no need to confute each and every error of vain opinion by engaging in lengthy discussion. They would need merely to express their understanding in words of sufficient clarity. As it is, however, the souls of the foolish suffer ever more severely, and ever more abominably, from this malady. Thus, even after the debt of truth has been paid as fully as one man can to another, they still defend their own unreasonable beliefs as though they were the very stuff of truth. They do this either because they are too blind to discern what is plain, or because they are entirely obstinate in their resolve not to accept even what they do discern. Often, therefore, there arises a need to speak at great length even of matters which are already clear. It is as though we were presenting them not for the inspection of men who will look at them, but as it were for an examination by touch by men whose eyes are closed. To what conclusion, though, shall we bring our discourse, and what will the limits of our discussion be, if we judge that we must always answer those who answer us? For those who cannot understand what is said to them, or those whose minds are so hardened to contradiction that they will not concur even when they do understand: these answer us and, as is written, 'speak hard things' and are tirelessly vain.¹ If we resolved to refute their contrary arguments as often as they resolve obstinately to contradict our reasoning in whatever way they can, without considering the truth of what they say, you see what an infinite and toilsome and fruitless task we should have. And so, my son Marcellinus, I should not like you, or any of those others for whose benefit this labour of ours has been freely undertaken in the love of Christ, to judge my writings in such a way as always to

¹ Psalm 94,4.

require an answer to everything you hear that contradicts what you read in them. Do not become like those foolish women of whom the apostle speaks: 'Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.'²

2 Of those things already set forth in Book 1

In the preceding book, then, since I had resolved to speak of the City of God and, with His help, taken in hand this whole work, it seemed to me that I should first resist those who attribute the wars by which this world is consumed, and especially the recent sack of Rome by the barbarians, to the Christian religion by which they are forbidden to offer abominable sacrifices to demons. What they ought rather to attribute to Christ is the fact that, for His name's sake, and against the laws and customs of war, the barbarians provided the largest churches as places of freedom in which men might take refuge, and in many cases showed such honour, not only to the true servants of Christ, but even to those who pretended to be such out of fear, that they pronounced unlawful for themselves things that would otherwise have been permitted them under the rules of war.

There then arose the question of why these divine blessings came even to the ungodly and ungrateful and, by the same token, why the hardships brought about by warfare afflicted the godly equally with the ungodly. This question has many aspects; for, in all our daily doings, both the munificence of God and the calamities of men often come indiscriminately and without distinction to those who live well and those who live ill. This puzzle often disquiets many; and, since the work which I had undertaken required me to solve it, I dwelt on it at some length, especially to bring consolation to those holy women of godly chastity against whom a deed was perpetrated by the enemy which, even though it did not take away their unshaken chastity, nonetheless brought grief to their modesty. I did this lest they be ashamed of life even though they have no guilt of which to be ashamed.

Next, I spoke briefly against those who, with most impudent boldness, taunt us with the Christians who suffered misfortune, and especially with the violation of bodily purity suffered by the women,

² 2 Tim. 3:7

even though they remained chaste and holy in mind. These most unworthy and heedless persons have declined far from those Romans whose many glorious deeds are praised and celebrated in their written annals. Indeed, they are the implacable enemies of their ancestors' glory; for, thanks to them, the Rome that was conceived and built by the labours of the men of old fell further while she still stood than ever she has fallen in her ruin. For in that ruin there fell only stones and wood; whereas by these men's lives were overthrown, not her walls, but her moral defences and adornments. More fatal than the flames which consumed the city's houses were the lusts that burned in their hearts. Having said these things, I brought my first book to an end.

I come next, then, to those evils which that city has endured from the beginning, either in herself or in the provinces subject to her: all of which, had the doctrine of the Gospel been in those days freely proclaimed against their false and treacherous gods, the Romans would have attributed to the Christian religion.

3 That history must be consulted in order to show what evils befell the Romans when they still worshipped the gods, before the Christian religion grew up

Remember, however, that, in recalling these things, I am still speaking against those ignorant men from whose lack of knowledge has arisen the vulgar saying, 'No rain: blame the Christians.'³ Those among our adversaries who are learned in the liberal arts and who love history are very well aware of these facts. They pretend not to know them, however, in order to arouse the greatest hostility in the untutored mob. For they strive to confirm the vulgar in their belief that the calamities which are bound to afflict the human race from time to time and from place to place occur because of the name of Christian, which is now ranged everywhere, and with such great fame and brilliance, against their gods.

Let them recall with us, therefore, the many and diverse calamities by which the Roman commonwealth was consumed before Christ had come in the flesh, and before His name was revealed to

³ Cf. Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 80,1; Tertullian, *Apol.*, 40.

the nations with that glory which they envy in vain. And let them defend, if they can, in the face of these things, those gods who are worshipped precisely so that their worshippers shall not suffer such evils. If they have suffered such things in our own time, they contend that these are to be imputed to us. But why, then, did those gods of whom I am about to speak permit such things to befall their worshippers long before the preaching of Christ's name and the prohibition of their sacrifices had offended them?

4 That the worshippers of the gods never received from the gods any wholesome precepts, and in their rites celebrated all manner of disgraceful things

First: why did the gods of Rome fail to ensure that their votaries were set free from their worst practices? The true God justly neglected those by whom He was not worshipped; but why did those gods whose worship these most ungrateful men complain is forbidden them not give their worshippers laws to help them to live well? Surely it was only fitting that such care on the part of men for the worship of the gods should have been matched by care on the part of the gods for the conduct of men.

But, you reply, it is of his own free will that someone is wicked. Who denies it? Nonetheless, it behoved the gods who were their protectors not to hide from the people who worshipped them the precepts of a good life, but to instruct them by means of plain commandments. By means of prophets, also, they should have called sinners together and censured them, plainly warning evil-doers of punishment and promising rewards to those who live righteously. But what of this kind was ever heard to resound in ready and clear speech in the temples of those gods? I myself, when a young man, used sometimes to come to their sacrilegious spectacles and games, and watch the ecstatic priests and listen to the musicians and enjoy the most disgraceful exhibitions which were enacted in honour of the gods and goddesses: of the virgin Caelestis, and of Berecynthia the mother of them all. Before the litter of Berecynthia, on the solemn day of her purification, songs were sung by the most lewd players which were not fit for the mother of any Senator, or of any honest man, or, indeed, the mothers even of the players themselves, to hear – let alone the mother of the gods! There is,

after all, something in the reverence which human beings feel for their parents that not even indecency itself can eradicate. Accordingly, the players themselves would no doubt have been ashamed to rehearse such wickedness at home before their own mothers as the obscene speeches and actions which they performed in public. Yet they performed them before the mother of the gods, and with a teeming multitude of both sexes watching and listening: a multitude which, even though drawn in from every side by curiosity, should at least have gone forth blushing with outraged modesty.

If these are sacred rites, what are profane ones? If this is purification, what is defilement? And these rites involved *fercula*, as though some feast were being celebrated at which the impure demons were to be delighted by a banquet given in their honour.⁴ But who does not see what manner of spirits they are who take delight in such filthy things? Who, save one who does not know that there are any foul spirits at all whose intention it is to deceive us with the name of gods, or one whose life is lived in such a fashion that he hopes to propitiate them, and fears their anger more than that of the true God?

5 Of the obscenities by which the mother of the gods was honoured by her worshippers

In this matter, I should certainly not wish to have the opinion of those who take pleasure in these most disgusting practices rather than seeking to end them. I should prefer the judgment of that Scipio Nasica who was chosen as the best of men by the Senate, and who received into his hands the image of that same demon and bore it into the city. Let him tell us whether he would wish to see his own mother so highly esteemed by the commonwealth as to have such divine honours awarded her as the Greeks and the Romans and other nations have indeed voted to certain mortals whose services they greatly valued, and whom they believed to have been made immortal and admitted to the assembly of the gods. Beyond doubt, he would choose such blessedness for his own mother if it were

⁴ A *ferculum* is a litter or bier used to carry the image of a god in procession; but *fercula* are also (a) the trays on which food is served, and (b) the courses of a banquet.

possible. If, however, we then ask whether he would wish to see the celebration of such vile acts among her divine honours, would he not cry out that he would rather see his mother lying dead and bereft of sense than that she should live as a goddess and hear such things with pleasure? God forbid that a Senator of the Roman people, furnished with such a mind that he forbade the building of a theatre in a city of strong men, should wish to see his mother worshipped as a goddess and propitiated with rites whose very words would disgust a virtuous woman. Nor would he by any means believe that the modesty of so praiseworthy a woman could be so undermined by deification that her worshippers would seek to honour her with language such that, if, while alive among men, she had heard it hurled at someone as an insult without stopping her ears and withdrawing herself, her family and husband and children would have blushed for her.

This mother of the gods, then, was of such a character that even the worst of men would have been ashamed to have her as his mother. Yet, in order to take possession of the minds of the Romans, she sought out the best of men – not to admonish and help him, but to cheat and deceive, like her of whom it is written that ‘a woman will hunt for the precious souls of men.’⁵ She did this so that this great-souled man should be so lifted up by her seemingly divine testimony as to esteem himself truly the best of men, and hence not seek that true godliness and religion without which every character, however praiseworthy, falters and falls through pride. But how else than by cunning could that goddess have sought out the best of men, when in her rites she seeks such things as the best of men would shrink from at their feasts?

6 That the gods of the pagans never laid down any doctrine of right living

Those divinities, then, took no care of the lives and morals of the cities and peoples by whom they were worshipped. Because they issued no dire prohibition of their own, they permitted them to become the worst of men. They allowed them to fall prey to those horrible and detestable evils which afflict not fields and vineyards,

⁵ Prov. 6,26.

not home and property, and not, indeed, only the body, which is subject to the mind, but the mind itself: the very mind that rules the body. Or, if there was any such prohibition, let it be shown; let it be proved. Nor let them tell us of I know not what secret doctrines, whispered into the ears of those initiated into the mysteries of religion, who were thereby taught probity and chastity of life.⁶ Rather, let them show us or remind us of the places that were at any time consecrated not to games and the obscene songs and gestures of actors, not to the celebration of the Flight of the Kings,⁷ with outpourings of every abandoned wickedness (a celebration of flight indeed: the flight of modesty and honour) – but to assemblies where the people received the instruction of the gods. Let them show us where the wretched people received the instruction of the gods concerning the restraint of avarice, the subduing of ambition, and the curbing of luxury, and where they might learn what Persius teaches when he rebukes us, saying: ‘Learn, O wretched ones, and know the causes of things; learn what we are, and to what end we are born: What is given to us; how and where to round off our goal pleasantly; what limit to set to wealth; how to choose well; what is the value of money, and how much of it should be spent on fatherland and loved ones; what God has commanded you to be, and what is your place in the business of mankind.’⁸ Let them tell us in what places those precepts of the gods who taught them were wont to be recited and frequently heard by the peoples who worshipped them: as we can show churches established for this purpose wherever the Christian religion has gone forth.

7 That the findings of the philosophers are useless because they are without divine authority; for man, naturally inclined to sin, is more influenced by the doings of the gods than by the arguments of men

Will our adversaries perhaps remind us of the schools of the philosophers and their disputations? In the first place, these are not

⁶ See Ch. 26. On mystery religions in general, see K. Prümm, ‘Mystery Religions, Graeco-Oriental’, *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York, 1967), vol. x, pp. 153ff. On the revival of such mystery religions during the fourth century, see P. de Labriolle, *La Réaction païenne* (Paris, 1950).

⁷ Cf. Ovid, *Fast.*, 2,68ff.

⁸ *Sat.*, 3,66ff.

Roman, but Greek; or, even if they are now Roman because Greece herself has been made into a Roman province, they are still not the precepts of gods, but the inventions of men. They are the inventions of men who, to the best of their endeavours, and endowed with the finest intellects, sought to investigate by reason what lies hidden in the order of nature, what should be desired and shunned in the sphere of morals, and what, in the field of logic, is entailed by strict deduction and what does and does not follow from given premisses. And some of them, insofar as they were aided by God, did indeed make certain great discoveries. When impeded by their own humanity, however, they erred, especially when the divine providence justly resisted their pride, so that it might show by comparison with them that it is through humility that the path of godliness ascends on high. There will, however, by the will of God, the true Lord, be an opportunity for us to investigate and discuss this later.

But the philosophers at least tried to discover the means by which a good life is to be lived and blamelessness attained. Surely, then, it would have been more just to vote divine honours to them rather than to the gods. How much better and more honourable it would have been to have a temple of Plato in which his books were read, rather than the temples in which the Galli were mutilated, the effeminate consecrated and madmen slashed themselves: temples in which all the cruel and wicked things customarily found in the rites of the gods – the wickedly cruel or cruelly wicked things – were celebrated! How much more satisfactory a way it would have been of training the young in justice if there had been public recitations of righteous laws given by the gods, rather than empty praise of the laws and institutes of the men of old! For even now, possessed as they are by what Persius calls ‘the burning poison of lust’,⁹ the worshippers of such gods would rather contemplate what Jupiter did than what Plato taught or Cato believed. Hence, a disgraceful young man in Terence gazes at a certain picture painted on a wall, ‘in which was shown how Jupiter sent, as they tell, a golden shower to fall into the lap of Danaë’. He finds, in so great an authority, a patron for his own wickedness; and so he boasts that, in what he does, he is imitating a god. ‘And what a god!’ he says: ‘He who

⁹ *Sat.*, 3.37.

from highest heaven shakes the temples with his thunder! Should I, a mere man, not do the same? Indeed, I did it, and with pleasure."¹⁰

8 Of the theatrical performances by which the gods
are not offended but placated by the portrayal in
them of their shameful acts

These, however, are only tales of the poets: they do not derive from the rites of the gods. I should not, in fact, like to say whether those mysteries are more shameful than the theatrical performances. I do, however, say this – and history confutes those who deny it: that it was not merely by their own ignorant submission that the Romans introduced into the rites of their gods those displays in which the fictions of the poets hold sway. Rather, the gods themselves, by imperious commands and, in a certain sense, by extortion, caused these things to be solemnly performed for them and consecrated in their honour. I touched briefly on this point in the first book: it was when pestilence was growing ever more severe that theatrical performances were first instituted at Rome by the authority of the Pontiff.¹¹ What man is there, then, who will not consider that, in living his own life, he ought rather to follow the examples set in plays performed by divine institution than the prescriptions of laws promulgated by merely human counsel? After all, if the poets who portrayed Jupiter as an adulterer did so falsely, then surely the chaste gods would have vented their anger in vengeance upon human beings for presenting such vile plays: not for neglecting to do so!

Of these theatrical performances, the most tolerable are the comedies and tragedies: that is, the dramas which poets compose for the stage but which, unlike so many others, do at least not make use of obscene language, even though they contain many shameful things. These are even included in what is called an honourable and liberal education, and boys are obliged by their elders to read and study them.

¹⁰ *Eunuch.*, 3,36f; 42f.

¹¹ Bk 1,32.

9 How the ancient Romans regarded that poetic licence to which the Greeks, following the judgment of their gods, chose to allow full expression

How the ancient Romans regarded this matter of theatrical performances is attested in the book written by Cicero called *De republica*, where Scipio, who is one of the disputants, says: 'The shameful acts portrayed in the comedies could never have won approval in the theatres had not the manners of the times already accepted such things.'¹² The Greeks of earlier times, however, at least preserved a certain consistency in their sinful opinions. For their law permitted the comedy to say what it liked of anyone it chose, and to do so by name. In the same work, therefore, Africanus says: 'Whom did it not mention? Or, rather, whom did it not vex? Whom has it spared? Granted that it struck at mischievous rabble-rousers and seditious men in the commonwealth – Cleon, Cleophon, Hyperbolus: let us tolerate this', he says,

although it were better for such citizens to be noted by the censor than by the poets. But for Pericles, who had for so many years presided over the city with the greatest authority in peace and war, to be attacked in their verses, and for these to be enacted on the stage: this was no more proper than if our own Plautus or Naevius had chosen to speak ill of Publius and Gnaeus Scipio, or Caecilius of Marcus Cato.

Next, a little further on, he says:

Although our Twelve Tables sanctioned the death penalty only for a very few crimes, among those deemed worthy of such punishment was anyone who brought infamy or disgrace upon another by singing or composing verses against him. Splendid! For how we lead our lives should be a matter for the judgment of magistrates interpreting the law rather than for the ingenuity of poets; nor ought we to have to listen to insults without being allowed by law to reply and to defend ourselves before a tribunal.

I have thought it well to quote these lines from the fourth book of Cicero's *De republica*.¹³ I have done so word for word, although

¹² *De rep.*, 4, 10, 11.

¹³ *Ibid.*

with some few words omitted or somewhat transposed, to make the meaning clear; and the passage is certainly pertinent to the matter which I am endeavouring to explain as well as I can. Scipio next makes some further remarks, and then concludes the passage by showing that the ancient Romans did not allow any living person to be either praised or vilified on the stage. The Greeks, however, as I have said, though less fastidious, were nonetheless more consistent in what they permitted. For they saw that their gods accepted and enjoyed such insults when directed in theatrical performances not only against men, but even against themselves. They saw also that it made no difference whether the scenes commemorated and enacted in the theatres and by their worshippers represented only the fancies of the poets or really their own wicked deeds. (Would that these things were deemed worthy only of laughter and not of imitation!) And so they concluded that it would have been far too proud a thing to spare the reputation of the city's rulers and citizens when the deities themselves did not wish even their own reputations to be spared.

10 With what injurious art the demons chose to
allow their crimes, whether false or genuine, to be
made known

As for the argument brought forward in defence of such performances, that what is said of the gods is not true, but false and invented: if you judge according to the godliness of our religion, this only makes matters worse. If you reflect upon the malice of the demons, however, what more acute and skilful means of deception could there be? For when some opprobrium is hurled at a good and beneficent governor of the fatherland, is this not unworthy in proportion as it is remote from the truth and foreign to the true facts of his life? What punishments will suffice, then, when such wicked and manifest injury is done to a god? But the malignant spirits whom the Romans suppose to be gods are willing to have even iniquities which they have not committed attributed to them, so long as they can ensnare the minds of human beings with these beliefs as with nets, and drag them down along with themselves to a predestined punishment. It may be that such things were, indeed, committed, but by men: by men who, to the joy of those who rejoice

in human error, are held to be gods. For the demons use a thousand harmful and deceitful arts to put themselves forward as objects of worship. Or again, even though no such crimes were actually committed by any men, it may be that those most cunning spirits freely accept such fictions concerning the divine beings, so that a sufficient authority may seem to have been handed down to earth from heaven itself for the perpetration of such vile and disgraceful things.

The Greeks, then, when they perceived themselves to be the servants of such divine beings, deemed that the poets should in no way refrain from reviling men on the stage just as often and just as greatly. They thought in this way either because they desired to resemble their gods in this respect, or because they feared that, if they required for themselves a more honourable reputation than they allowed the gods, and so in this sense placed themselves above them, they might provoke them to anger.

11 That, among the Greeks, actors were admitted to public office in the commonwealth in the belief that those who pleased the gods could hardly be rejected by men

To the consistency of the Greeks also belongs the fact that they esteemed those who acted in such plays worthy to receive no small honour from the city. For in that same book called *De republica*¹⁴ we are reminded that Aeschines, an Athenian and a man of outstanding eloquence, who as a young man had acted in tragedies, entered the public life of the commonwealth. Again, Aristodemus, also a tragic actor, was often sent by the Athenians as their legate to Philip in great matters of peace and war. For the Greeks did not deem it appropriate, when they saw how readily theatrical arts and displays were accepted by the gods, to attach an ignominious station and esteem to the very persons who performed them.

The Greeks indeed acted shamefully in this; but they were at least entirely consistent with the character of their gods. They had not presumed to exempt the lives of their citizens from being lashed by the tongues of poets and actors when they perceived that the lives of the gods themselves were defamed with the consent and

¹ *De rep.*, 4, 11, 13.

pleasure of those same gods. And, in the same way, the men by whom those theatrical performances were enacted which the Greeks had found to be so pleasing to the deities whose subjects they were seemed to them to be by no means worthy of rejection, but, indeed, to be equally worthy of honour. After all, they honoured the priests through whom they offered sacrificial victims acceptable to the gods. What reason could they find for doing this, then, while at the same time holding actors in contempt? For it was through such actors that they exhibited to the gods, for their pleasure or honour, those things which they had been taught to believe that the gods required of them, and which they would be angry at not receiving.

Labeo, a man considered to be most learned in such matters, notes that good and bad deities are distinguished by a difference of worship. For evil gods, he asserts, are propitiated by slaughter and mournful supplications, and good ones by happy and joyful service such as – as he himself says – games, festivals and banquets. With God's help, however, we shall consider all this more carefully at a later stage. For the time being, let us remain with the subject in hand. Thus, it does not matter whether offerings of all kinds are made to all the gods without distinction, as if all were good, or whether, as Labeo thought, a certain discrimination is exercised and one kind of service is given to the gods of one kind and another to the others. (Although it is not, in fact, fitting to speak of 'good' and 'bad' gods; for they are all bad: they are all unclean spirits.) The Greeks are entirely consistent in honouring both the priests by whom sacrificial rites are administered and the actors by whom plays are performed. Otherwise, they might be convicted of doing injustice to all their gods, if the plays were pleasing to all, or – which is worse – to those who are deemed good, if the plays were enjoyed only by them.

12 That the Romans, in refusing to the poets the liberty in relation to men that they allowed them in relation to the gods, showed more consideration for men than for the gods

But the Romans, as Scipio boasts in that dialogue called *De republica*, refused to expose their own lives and reputations to the

slanders and injuries of the poets, even establishing it as a capital offence if anyone should dare to compose such verses. As far as they themselves were concerned, this was an honourable enough arrangement. With respect to the gods, however, it was proud and irreligious. For they knew that the gods not only patiently, but indeed willingly, suffered themselves to be lashed by the slanders and maledictions of the poets. Yet they considered it shameful that they themselves should be insulted in the same ways as the gods. Thus, they protected themselves by law even while including such insults in their own solemn rites.

Why, then, O Scipio, do you praise the fact that Roman poets were denied such licence, lest they inflict any dishonour upon the Roman people, when you see that they spared none of your gods? Does it seem to you that your Senate house should be held in greater esteem than the Capitol, and Rome alone than the whole of heaven? Do you consider that your poets should be prohibited by law from wagging their malicious tongues against your citizens, yet should be able to mock your gods with impunity, with no senator, no censor, no prince or pontiff to impose a prohibition upon them? It was, forsooth, improper if Plautus or Naevius should speak ill of Publius or Gnaeus Scipio, or Caecilius of Marcus Cato, yet proper that your Terence should lure a young man to iniquity by the shameful behaviour of Jupiter, the Best and Greatest!

13 That the Romans should have known that gods
who desired to be worshipped with disgraceful plays
were unworthy of divine honours

But perhaps, if Scipio were still alive, he would answer me by saying, 'How could we not let these things go unpunished when the gods willed that they should be sacred? For it was they who introduced into the customs of Rome the theatrical performances in which such things are celebrated and recited and enacted. It was they who commanded that such things should be inaugurated and exhibited in their honour.' Why, then, was it not seen all the more clearly that they were not true gods, and not in the least worthy of the divine honours conferred on them by the commonwealth? It would not have been thought in the smallest degree worthy or fitting to worship them had they required plays to be acted in which

Roman citizens were mocked! How, then, I ask, can they be thought worthy of worship, and why are they not deemed detestable spirits, when, in their desire to betray us, they demand that their own crimes be celebrated in their honour?

The Romans, then, driven by poisonous superstition, worshipped gods who, as they saw, wished to have shameful performances consecrated to them. But they were so mindful of their own dignity and modesty that they would in no circumstances grant honours, as the Greeks had, to the actors of such plays. As that same Scipio puts it in the dialogue of Cicero: 'Since they held the whole art of comedy and the theatre in contempt, they resolved that all men of that sort should not only be excluded from the honours accorded to other citizens, but should even be removed from the censors' lists as members of their tribe.'¹⁵ This was, of course, a splendid provision, and one which must be attributed with approval to the prudence of the Romans; although I could wish that they had always pursued and imitated it. Behold, how right it was that any Roman citizen who chose to be an actor was not only excluded from any position of honour, but was not even allowed by the censor to retain a place in his own tribe! O what a spirit animated that city, eager for praise and faithfully Roman! But let someone tell me this: by what consistent principle were theatrical persons excluded from every honour, yet theatrical performances included in the honours paid to the gods? For a long time, Roman virtue knew nothing of those theatrical arts which, even when sought only as a means of gratifying human pleasure, bring with them an insidious decline of human morals. It was the gods who required that such things be exhibited for them. So why is it that the actor through whom the god is worshipped is himself cast aside? How can you dare to censure the actor of those wicked performances while adoring the god who demands them?

This, then, is the controversy in which the Greeks and Romans are engaged. The Greeks consider that they are right to honour the men who perform the plays, because they worship the gods who demand them. The Romans, however, do not permit actors to dishonour even their plebeian tribe, much less their Senate house. The whole of this discussion may be resolved into the following

¹⁵ *De rep.*, 4, 10, 10; cf. Tertullian, *De spect.*, 22.

syllogism. As the major premiss, the Greeks say that, if such gods are to be worshipped, then certainly such men should be honoured also. The Romans state as the minor premiss that such men should by no means be honoured. And the Christians conclude that such gods are therefore by no means to be worshipped.

14 That Plato, who accorded to poets no place in his well-ordered city, was better than those gods who wish to be honoured by theatrical performances

We must next ask why the poets themselves, the composers of such fables, who are prohibited by the law of the Twelve Tables from damaging the reputation of citizens yet who hurl shameful abuse at the gods, are not considered just as dishonourable as the actors are. By what process of reasoning is it considered right that the actors of these poetic creations and ignoble portrayals of the gods are deemed infamous, yet their composers are honoured? Should we not here rather award the palm to a Greek: to Plato, who, in formulating his account of what a city should be like, prescribed that poets should be banished from the city as enemies of the truth?¹⁶ Truly, he could not bear to see base injury done to the gods, and he refused to have the souls of his citizens tainted and corrupted by falsehood.

Compare, now, the humanity of Plato, who banished poets from the city so that the citizens should not be deceived, with the divinity of those gods who demanded theatrical performances in their own honour. Plato urged the fickle and lascivious Greeks – although his arguments did not persuade them – not to write such things. But from the grave and modest Romans the gods extorted that such plays should indeed be performed. Moreover, they wished to have these things not only performed, but dedicated to themselves, consecrated to themselves, and exhibited to themselves at solemn festivals. To which, then, would it be more honourable for a city to accord divine honours? To Plato, who prohibited these base and shameful things, or to the demons who, because they took delight in deceiving men, made it impossible for him to persuade them? Labeo considered that Plato should be commemorated among the demigods, like Hercules or Romulus; and he puts the demigods

¹⁶ Cf. Plato, *Rep.*, 3,398A; 8,568B, 10,605A; 607B.

above the heroes, though he places both among the divine beings. For my part, I do not doubt that this Plato, whom he calls a demigod, should be set not only above the heroes, but even above the gods themselves.

But the laws of the Romans do resemble the dialogues of Plato in one respect. For, while the latter condemns all poetic deceptions, the former at any rate withhold from the poets the licence to speak ill of men. Plato excludes poets from dwelling in the city; the Romans at least exclude the actors of poetic fables from membership of the city. Presumably, indeed, if the actors had dared to do anything contrary to the will of those gods who demanded their theatrical performances, the Romans would have banished them altogether. The Romans, then, could hardly have received laws for the formation of good morals or the correction of bad from their gods, or have hoped to do so; for in their own laws they already surpassed and shamed the morals of the gods.

The gods, then, demand theatrical performances in their own honour; the Romans exclude men of the theatre from all honours. The gods demand that they should be celebrated by means of poetic deceptions representing their own disgrace; the Romans admonish impudent poets not to bring disgrace upon men. But that demigod Plato both opposed the desire of such gods and showed the state of affairs which ought to have been perfected by the native character of the Romans themselves. For he entirely refused to allow poets to live in a well-ordered city, either because they deceive according to their own judgment, or because they offer to wretched men the worst possible examples as though they were the deeds of gods. We, however, do not assert that Plato is either a god or a demigod. We do not compare him to any holy angel of the Supreme God, or to any prophet of truth, or to any apostle, or to any of Christ's martyrs, or to any Christian man; and our reason for saying this will, with God's favour, be explained in its due place. Since, however, our adversaries wish him to be considered a demigod, we certainly deem him worthy to be preferred, if not to Romulus and Hercules (although no historian or poet has said or pretended that Plato slew his brother or committed any other crime), certainly to Priapus or to any Cynocephalus, or to Fever: divine beings whom the Romans have in part received from foreign lands and in part consecrated as native to themselves. For how could gods of this kind either pro-

hibit such evils of the soul and morals by their precepts and laws, or take care to extirpate them once they had sprung up? These gods, indeed, were actually at pains to sow and foster wicked acts, by desiring that their deeds – or deeds thought to be theirs – should be made known to the people through theatrical celebrations. Thus, by their will, the most shameful lust was inflamed among human beings as if by divine authority. Cicero exclaims against this, albeit in vain, when he says, in treating of poets: ‘When the poets win the applause and approbation of the people as if it were that of some great and wise master, what darkness falls, what fears burst in, what desires they kindle!’¹⁷

15 That the Romans established certain of their gods through flattery, not reason

But how can we suppose these false gods to have been chosen by reason rather than flattery? The Romans wish to call Plato a demigod; yet they do not consider him worthy of even a little shrine, even though he toiled in so many dialogues to prevent the corruption of morals by those vices of the mind which ought to be especially shunned. Their own Romulus, however – even though their more secret doctrine commends him as a demigod and not as a god – they have esteemed more highly than many gods. They have, indeed, assigned to him a flamen – that is, a kind of priest so eminent in the Roman rites (as their pointed hats testify) that only three of their divine beings have flamens appointed for them: the Flamen Dialis of Jupiter, the Flamen Martialis of Mars, and the Flamen Quirinalis of Romulus. (After his reputed reception into heaven, Romulus was, by the grace of his fellow citizens, named Quirinus.) In being given this honour, Romulus was placed above Neptune and Pluto, the brothers of Jupiter. He was even placed above Saturn himself, the father of Neptune and Pluto and Jupiter. For the Romans assigned to Romulus the same great priesthood that they assigned to Jupiter, and also to Mars, the reputed father of Romulus. Perhaps, indeed, they assigned this honour to Mars precisely because he was the father of Romulus.

¹⁷ *De rep.*, 4,9,9.

16 That if the gods had possessed any regard for justice, the Romans would have received precepts of life from them, rather than having to borrow them from other men

Again, had the Romans been able to receive laws of right living from their gods, they would not have had to borrow the laws of Solon from the Athenians some years after Rome's foundation.¹⁸ (They did not, however, hold fast to these as they had received them, but endeavoured to improve and amend them.) Also, although Lycurgus pretended that he had instituted laws for the Spartans by the authority of Apollo, the Romans wisely refused to believe this, and so received nothing from that source. Numa Pompilius, the successor of Romulus in the kingdom, is said to have established certain laws; which were, however, not at all sufficient for the government of the city. He also established many sacred rites, although he is not reported to have received even these from divine beings. As to evils of the soul, then – evils of life, evils of conduct which are of so severe a kind that, as the most learned men affirm, states perish because of them even while their towns still stand: the gods of the Romans took not the least care to safeguard their worshippers against being afflicted by these. On the contrary, as we have argued above, they were in every way at pains to increase them.

17 Of the rape of the Sabine women and the other iniquities which flourished in the city of Rome even in the days when she was most highly esteemed

But perhaps the divine beings saw no need to appoint laws for the Roman people because, as Sallust says, 'justice and goodness prevailed among them as much by nature as by law'.¹⁹ I take it, then, that the rape of the Sabine women was an instance of this justice and goodness. For what could be more just or good than to use the false promise of an entertainment to carry young women off by force, without the consent of their parents? Even if the Sabines

¹⁸ Livy, 3,31ff.

¹⁹ *Catil.*, 9,1.

were wrong to withhold their daughters when asked, how much more wrong was it to abduct them when they were not given! The Romans might with some justice have waged war against that people when they refused a request to give their daughters in marriage to those who shared the country with them and were their neighbours. But it was certainly not just to wage war against the same people because they sought to rescue their stolen daughters. War should have been declared at the beginning. In that case, Mars might have helped his warlike son to avenge by force of arms the injury done him by the refusal of marriage, and to attain in this way the women whom he desired. For perhaps some right of war might have justified a victor in carrying off the women who had been unjustly refused. No right of peace, however, entitled him to abduct those who were not given to him and then to wage unjust war against their justly angered parents.

There followed, however, a more beneficent and happier state of things. For, though the Circensian Games continued to be held in memory of the deceit, the crime of Romulus was not allowed to set a precedent in that city and realm. The Romans found it quite easy to commit the error of consecrating Romulus as a god after that iniquity; but they still did not permit any law or custom to sanction the emulation of his deeds as an abductor of women.

By this 'justice and goodness', then, it came to pass that, after the expulsion of Tarquin the king and his family, whose son had violently ravished Lucretia, the consul Junius Brutus forced his colleague Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus to abdicate his magistracy. Collatinus was the husband of Lucretia, and a good and innocent man; yet Brutus would not suffer him to dwell in the city because he was of the name and lineage of Tarquin. Brutus did this dark deed with the favour or sufferance of the people – of the people from whom that same Collatinus, and Brutus himself, had received the consulship.

By this 'justice and goodness' it came to pass that Marcus Camillus, one of the most distinguished men of his age, received similar treatment. After ten years of war during which the Roman army had been so grievously afflicted by bad generalship that Rome herself now feared and trembled for her safety, he defeated the people of Veii, the most deadly foes of the Roman people, with consummate ease, and captured their most prosperous city. Then, because

of the envy of those who sought to disparage his virtue and the insolence of the tribunes of the people, criminal proceedings were begun against him. Perceiving the ingratitude of the city which he had delivered, and realising that he would most certainly be condemned, he went voluntarily into exile and, in his absence, was fined 10,000 *asses*. Soon, however, he was again to be the saviour of his ungrateful country.

But it would be a wearisome thing now to recall all those deeds of shame and injustice by which that city was convulsed as the mighty strove to make the common people their subjects and the common people resisted their attempts to subdue them. Suffice it to say that the defenders of both parties were actuated rather by love of victory than by any consideration of equity and goodness.

18 What Sallust's History reveals of the morals of the Roman people both when oppressed by fear and at ease in security

I shall, therefore, confine myself to the testimony of Sallust, whose words in praise of the Romans furnished our present discussion with its starting-point. 'Justice and goodness', he says, 'prevailed among them as much by nature as by law'. He was speaking of that period just after the expulsion of the kings, when the city had become great in an astonishingly short time. Yet the same author acknowledges in the first book of his History – indeed, in the preface to it – that only a little while after the commonwealth had been transferred from kings to consuls, the more powerful men began to act unjustly, as a result of which the common people separated themselves from the patricians and there were other rifts in the city. He notes first that, between the second and last Carthaginian wars, the Romans displayed the highest morals and the greatest harmony. The cause of this happy state of affairs, however, was not the love of justice, but the fear of an uncertain peace while Carthage remained standing. (This also was why Nasica opposed the destruction of Carthage. He wished to suppress wickedness and to preserve those outstanding morals by restraining vice through fear.) Sallust then goes on to say: 'After the destruction of Carthage, discord, avarice, ambition and the other evils to which prosperity often gives rise were greatly increased.' But he gives us to understand that such

things were wont to arise and increase even before this. For he subjoins this explanation of what he has said:

Injuries were wrought by the more powerful men, so that the common people separated themselves from the patricians and there were other dissensions also. But these things had occurred in the state from the beginning, and the rule of equitable and moderate law lasted, after the banishment of the kings, only until the fear of Tarquin and the grievous war with Etruria were ended.²⁰

Note how, even in that short time after the banishment (that is, the expulsion) of the kings when equitable and moderate law to some extent ruled, Sallust says that the cause was fear. The Romans lived as they did only because they feared the war being waged against them by Tarquin the king in alliance with the Etruscans after his expulsion from the kingdom and the city. And note also what he writes next:

Thereafter, the patricians treated the common people as their slaves, and dealt with their lives and bodies after the fashion of the kings, driving them from their fields, and lording it over those who were destitute of land. The common people, oppressed by these cruelties, and especially by high rates of interest, and at the same time bearing the burden of taxation and military service in the ceaseless wars, withdrew under arms to the Sacred Hill and the Aventine, and so presently secured for themselves the Tribunes of the People and other rights. But the end of discord and strife on both sides was brought about only by the second Punic War.²¹

You see, then, what manner of men the Romans were at this time – that is, a short while after the expulsion of the kings. And these were the men of whom Sallust said that ‘justice and goodness prevailed among them as much by nature as by law’! But if this was the time when the Roman commonwealth is said to have been at its fairest and best, what are we to say or think now, when we come to the succeeding time: to the time when the city, in the words of the same historian, ‘altering little by little from the fairest and best, became the worst and most shameful’?²² This was, of course, as

²⁰ *Hist. frag.*, I, 11.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Catil.*, 5, 9.

he records, after the destruction of Carthage. How Sallust briefly recollects and treats of these times can be read in his History, where he shows how the bad morals which came forth from prosperity led at last to civil wars. 'From that time forth', he says, 'the morals of our forefathers were swept away, not by slow degrees, as formerly, but as if by a torrent. Young persons were so much corrupted by luxury and avarice that it may fairly be said that sons were born who could neither preserve their own property nor allow others to preserve theirs.'²³ Sallust then goes on to speak of the vices of Sulla and of all the other depravity in the commonwealth; and there are other authors, though of inferior eloquence, who concur with him in this.

You see, then, I take it – anyone who will reflect on the matter will, after all, easily perceive it – into what a deplorable state of complete moral collapse the city of Rome had fallen long before the advent of our Heavenly King. For these things took place not only before Christ, present in the flesh, had begun to teach, but even before He was born of the Virgin. Our adversaries do not presume to impute to their own gods the many grievous ills of those times: ills which were more bearable in the earlier days, but which became intolerable and horrible after the destruction of Carthage. They do not do so even though it was the gods themselves who, by their malignant cunning, implanted in the minds of men the beliefs from which all such vices arose. Why, therefore, do they impute the evils of this present age to Christ? For by His most wholesome doctrine Christ forbids the worship of false and deceitful gods; and by His divine authority He detests and condemns the poisonous and shameful lusts of mankind. Indeed, He is by degrees withdrawing His servants from a world decaying and collapsing under these evils, in order to build with them an eternal and most glorious City: a City founded not upon the plaudits of vanity, but on the judgment of truth.

19 Of the corruption of the Roman commonwealth before Christ abolished the worship of the gods

Behold, then, the Roman commonwealth which, 'altering little by little from the fairest and best, became the worst and most

²³ *Hist. frag.*, 1,16.

shameful! It is not I who am the first to say this, but their own authors, from whom we learnt these things for a fee, and who spoke long before the coming of Christ. Behold: before the coming of Christ and after the destruction of Carthage, 'the morals of our forefathers were swept away, not by slow degrees, as formerly, but as if by a torrent', so greatly were young persons corrupted by luxury and avarice. Let our adversaries read to us the commandments against luxury and avarice given to the Roman people by their gods. On the other hand, would that the gods had only been silent on the subjects of chastity and modesty, and not required of their worshippers those indecent and ignoble displays to which they lent a pernicious authority by their pretended divinity! By contrast, let our adversaries read our many commandments against avarice and luxury, found in the prophets, in the holy Gospel, in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles, which are everywhere read to the people who assemble to hear them. How excellent, how divine they are! They are not like the noisy disputes of the philosophers: they are like an oracle of God Himself, pealing from the clouds! Yet they do not impute to their own gods the luxury and avarice and the disgrace and utter shame brought upon the commonwealth before the coming of Christ by its cruel and degraded morals. They do, however, reproach the Christian religion with every affliction which has in these times befallen their pride and luxuriousness.

If 'the kings of the earth and all nations, princes and all the judges of the earth, young men and maidens, old men and children',²⁴ people of every age and each sex; if those to whom John the Baptist spoke, even the tax gatherers and the soldiers;²⁵ if all these together were to hear and embrace the Christian precepts of justice and moral virtue, then would the commonwealth adorn its lands with happiness in this present life and ascend to the summit of life eternal, there to reign in utmost blessedness. As it is, however, one man listens while another condemns, and more are lovers of the evil blandishments of vice than of austere virtue. Christ's servants, therefore, be they kings or princes or judges, soldiers or provincials, rich men or poor, free or slaves, of whichever sex, are commanded to endure this earthly commonwealth, however depraved and

²⁴ Psalm 148, 11f.

²⁵ Luke 3, 12f.

wholly vile it may be, if they must. By their endurance, however, they will win for themselves a place of the highest eminence in the most holy and august court of angels, and in that heavenly Commonwealth whose law is the will of God.

20 Of the kind of happiness that those who accuse
the Christian age wish to enjoy, and by what morals
they live

But those who worship and love the gods of Rome, whom they rejoice to imitate even in their wickedness and shame, do not at all care that the commonwealth is depraved and wholly vile. 'Only let it stand', they say;

only let it flourish with abundant treasures, glorious in victory or – which is better – secure in peace, and what do we care? What is of more concern to us is that a man's wealth should be always increasing for the support of his daily pleasure, and that the stronger may thereby be able to subject weaker men to themselves. Let the poor serve the rich because of their abundance, and let them enjoy under their patronage a senseless idleness; and let the rich abuse the poor as their clients and the appendages of their pride. Let the poor applaud, not those who take counsel for their welfare, but those who are most lavish with pleasures. Let nothing unpleasant be required; let no impurity be forbidden; let kings care not how good their subjects are, but how docile. Let provinces serve their kings not as the rulers of their morals, but as the lords of their property and the procurers of their pleasures; and let them not honour them in sincerity, but fear them in worthlessness and servility. Let the laws take cognisance rather of the harm done by a man to his neighbour's vineyard than of that which he does to his own life. Let no one be brought to judgment unless he harms another's property or house or health or is troublesome or offensive to someone against his will. Otherwise, let everyone do as he wishes with what is his, either with his own cronies or with anyone else who is willing. Let there be plenty of public whores for anyone to enjoy who wishes to do so, and especially for those who cannot afford to keep private ones. Let the most ample and ornate houses be built; let sumptuous feasts be attended, where anyone who wishes and is able may play, drink,

vomit and dissipate day and night. Let the noise of dancing be heard everywhere, and let the theatres boil with cries of dishonourable rejoicing and all kinds of the most cruel and wicked pleasure. If anyone disapproves of this happiness, let him be a public enemy. If anyone attempts to change or abolish it, let the abandoned multitude deny him a hearing, expel him from the assemblies, and remove him from among the living. Let those who procure this state of things for the people and preserve it when they have it be treated as gods. Let them be worshipped as they desire; let them demand whatever games they wish; let them hold them with, or at the expense of, their worshippers. Only let them ensure that such happiness is not assailed by enemy, pestilence or any calamity.

Would not such a commonwealth as this suggest, to any sane man, not the Roman empire, but the palace of Sardanapalus? This was the king who, long ago, was so devoted to pleasure that he caused it to be inscribed on his tomb that his only possessions in death were those things that he had swallowed and consumed by his greed while he was alive.²⁶ If the Romans had a king of this kind – both indulgent of himself and imposing no irksome restraint on them in such matters – they would surely consecrate to him a temple and a flamen with greater pleasure than the Romans of old showed in doing so for Romulus!

21 Cicero's opinion of the Roman commonwealth

It may be, however, that our adversaries scorn him who called the Roman commonwealth 'the worst and most shameful'. Perhaps they do not care how full it is of disgrace and dishonour by reason of its most wicked and shameful morals, provided only that it stands firm and endures. Let them, then, hear, not what Sallust says – that it became 'the worst and most shameful' – but what Cicero contends: that, in his day, it perished entirely, and that nothing at all remained of the commonwealth.

He introduces Scipio – he who had destroyed Carthage – discussing the commonwealth at a time when there were already warning signs that it was shortly to perish from the corruption that

²⁶ Cf. Cicero, *Tusc. disp.*, 5,35,101; *De fin.*, 2,32,106.

Sallust describes. Indeed, at the time of the discussion, one of the Gracchi – with whom, as Sallust says, the grave seditions began – had already been put to death; for his death is mentioned in that same work. Now Scipio, at the end of the second book, says:

Among the different sounds of lyres or flutes and the voices of singers, a certain harmony must be maintained which the cultivated ear cannot bear to hear disrupted or discordant; and such harmony, concordant and consistent, may be brought about by the balancing of even the most dissimilar voices. So too, when the highest, lowest and, between them, the intermediate orders of society are balanced by reason as though they were voices, the city may embody a consonance blended of quite dissimilar elements. What musicians call harmony in singing is concord in the city, which is the most artful and best bond of security in the commonwealth, and which, without justice, cannot be secured at all.²⁷

Scipio then examined somewhat more broadly and fully how beneficial the presence of justice is to the city and how prejudicial its absence. At this point, Philus, one of those present at the discussion, rose and requested that this question should be treated with greater care. He asked that more should be said of justice in the light of what was then commonly proposed: that a commonwealth cannot be governed without injustice. Scipio accordingly agreed that this question should be discussed and explained. He replied that, in his view, nothing had so far been said about the commonwealth which might enable further progress to be made unless two things were now established: first, that the ‘cannot be governed without injustice’ maxim is false, and, second, that, on the contrary, it is pre-eminently true that the commonwealth cannot be governed without the most supreme justice.²⁸

Discussion of this question was deferred until the next day. Then, in the third book, the debate was conducted with great vigour. Philus himself took the side of those who held that the state cannot be governed without injustice. He took special care to dissociate himself from this view, however, lest it be thought that he really held it. He assiduously put the case for injustice against

²⁷ *De rep.*, 2,42,69.

²⁸ *De rep.*, 2,44,70.

justice, and endeavoured by plausible reasoning and examples to show that injustice is advantageous and justice useless to the commonwealth. At the request of all, Laelius then proceeded to defend justice. He asserted to the best of his ability that nothing is so inimical to a city as injustice; and he urged that no commonwealth can in any way be governed or continue to exist without a high degree of justice. When this question is seen to have been disposed of satisfactorily, Scipio returns to his interrupted theme and recalls and commends his own brief definition of a commonwealth, which he had said to be 'the property of a people'. 'A people' he defines as being not every assembly of a multitude, but an assembly united in fellowship by common agreement as to what is right and by a community of interest.²⁹ He then explains the great advantage of definition in debate, and he infers from these definitions of his own that a commonwealth – that is, the property of a people – exists when it is well and justly governed, either by a single king, or by a few of the highest men, or by the people at large. But when the king is unjust (or a tyrant, as he put it, after the Greek fashion), or the highest men are unjust (he called a union of such men a 'faction'), or the people itself is unjust (in this case he found no term in current use; although he might have called the people itself a 'tyrant') then the commonwealth is not merely flawed, as had been argued the day before. Rather, as the conclusions entailed by Scipio's definitions would indicate, it entirely ceases to be. For it could not be 'the property of a people', he said, when a tyrant or a faction took possession of it. Moreover, the people itself would no longer be a people if it were unjust: for it would then no longer answer to the definition of a people as a multitude united in fellowship by common agreement as to what is right and by a community of interest. When, therefore, the Roman commonwealth was such as Sallust described it, it was not merely 'the worst and most shameful', as he asserts. Rather, according to the reasoning developed in their discussion of the commonwealth by its great and leading men, it had ceased to exist altogether.

Again, at the beginning of the fifth book, where Cicero is speaking his own thoughts rather than those of Scipio or anyone else, he first quotes a line from the poet Ennius, who says: 'Ancient ways

²⁹ *De rep.*, 1,25,39.

and men sustain the affairs of Rome.' 'This line', Cicero then says,

seems to me, by reason of its brevity and truth, to be like the utterance of an oracle. For neither could the men, had not the ways of the city been what they were, nor the ways themselves, had not such men presided over them, have founded or for so long possessed a commonwealth so vast and broad in its sway. From time immemorial, the ways of our forebears called forth outstanding men, and these excellent men upheld the ways and institutions of their ancestors. Our age, however, having received the commonwealth as though it were an admirable picture fading with time, has not only neglected to restore it to its former colours, but has taken no care to preserve even the barest vestige of what it was and, as it were, its remaining lineaments. For what is left of those ancient ways which, as Ennius said, sustained the affairs of Rome? We see them so far fallen into decay that not only are they not cultivated: they are not even known. And what shall I say of our men? For morals have perished from the want of great men; and we must not only be held accountable for so great an evil: we must, indeed, plead our cause as though charged with a capital offence. For it is because of our vices, and not through any mischance, that we now retain only the name of the commonwealth that we long ago lost in fact.³⁰

This was the confession of Cicero. It was made long indeed after the death of Africanus, whom Cicero caused to be one of the disputants in his book *De republica*, but still before the coming of Christ. If such things had been thought and said after the Christian religion had been preached and had grown great, which of our opponents would not have deemed these evils attributable to the Christians? Why, then, did their gods take no care to prevent the ruin and loss of that commonwealth whose fall Cicero so sorrowfully deplores? Those who praise it should consider whether true justice flourished in it even in the ancient days of men and morals, or whether perhaps even then it was not rather a coloured picture than a moral reality; for, without knowing it, Cicero says as much.

If God wills it, however, we shall consider this question elsewhere. For, in due course, having regard to the definitions which Cicero himself voiced through Scipio when he briefly propounded

³⁰ *De rep.*, 5, 1.

what a commonwealth is and what a people is (definitions attested by many other utterances both of his own and of those whom he portrayed as taking part in that same discussion), I shall attempt to show that no such commonwealth ever existed, because true justice was never present in it.³¹ There was, of course, according to a more practicable definition, a commonwealth of a sort; and it was certainly better administered by the Romans of more ancient times than by those who have come after them. True justice, however, does not exist other than in that commonwealth whose Founder and Ruler is Christ. You may indeed call it a commonwealth if you like, for we cannot deny that it is 'the property of a people'. But if this name, which has become familiar in other places and circumstances, is perhaps too remote from our customary manner of speaking, we can at least say that there is true justice in that City of which Holy Scripture says: 'Glorious things are spoken of thee, O City of God.'³²

**22 That the gods of the Romans never took any
pains to save the commonwealth from being
destroyed by evil ways**

But as to the present question: however worthy of praise they say the commonwealth was or is, it had, according to their own most learned authors, already become entirely evil and profligate long before the coming of Christ. Indeed, it no longer existed, and had perished utterly by reason of its most corrupt morals. To save it from perishing, then, the gods who were its guardians ought above all else to have given precepts of life and morals to the people who worshipped them: by whom they were worshipped in so many temples and with so many priests and kinds of sacrifice, with such a number and variety of rites, and with so many solemn feasts and celebrations of such fine games. But the demons did nothing except look after their own affairs. They did not care how their worshippers lived: or, rather, they were content that their worshippers should live in wickedness provided only that they continued, under the dominion of fear, to do all these things in their honour.

³¹ Bk XIX, 21; 24.

³² Psalm 87, 3.

On the other hand, if they did give such precepts, let something be produced or displayed. Let something be read out to show what laws of the gods were given to that city only to be despised by the Gracchi, when they threw all things into turmoil by their seditions; by Marius and Cinna and Carbo, when they proceeded even to civil wars – undertaken for the most unworthy causes, cruelly waged, and more cruelly ended; and, finally, by Sulla himself. Who would not shudder at the life and character and deeds of Sulla as described by Sallust and other writers of history? Who would not admit that the commonwealth had by then perished?

In view of the conduct of citizens of this sort, will our adversaries perhaps still venture to reply, as they usually do, with that passage from Virgil in defence of their gods? – ‘All the gods upon whom this realm stood have gone, forsaking shrine and altar.’³³ If so, then, first, they have no reason to complain that the Christian religion so offended their gods that they deserted them. For their own forebears, by their evil ways, had already driven all these numerous little gods away from the city’s altars like so many flies. But where, in any case, was that swarm of divinities when, long before the ancient ways had fallen into decay, Rome was taken and burnt by the Gauls? Present but asleep, perhaps? For at that time the whole city fell into in the power of the enemy, apart from the Capitoline Hill; and even that would have been taken had not the geese, at any rate, been awake while the gods slept.³⁴ From this incident, Rome almost descended to the superstition of the Egyptians, who worship beasts and birds; for they honoured the goose in a yearly festival.³⁵

But these extrinsic things – evils of the body rather than the soul, which are inflicted by enemies or by some other misfortune – are for the moment not at issue. For the time being, I am concerned with the collapse of those moral standards which, corrupted little by little at first, then tumbled pell-mell like a torrent until, though the houses and city walls remained intact, the commonwealth was so ruined that even its own most eminent authors do not hesitate to say that it was lost. To be sure, if they had given precepts concerning the good life and justice to the city and the city had ignored them, all the gods would then have been right to give Rome up for

³³ *Aen.*, 2,351f.

³⁴ *Livy*, 5,37ff.

³⁵ Cf. *Plutarch, De fort. Rom.*, 12.

lost, 'forsaking shrine and altar'. But what kind of gods were they, I ask, who refused to dwell with a nation that worshipped them when that nation lived wickedly only because they had not taught it how to live well?

23 That the vicissitudes of the temporal world
depend not upon the favour or opposition of
demons, but upon the judgment of the true God

Furthermore, what of the fact that the gods seem to assist men in the gratification of their desires, yet manifestly do not help them to achieve restraint? Marius, for example, was an upstart and a man of low birth, a most bloodthirsty author and wager of civil wars. Did they help him to become consul seven times, and to die an old man in his seventh consulship so that he might not fall into the hands of Sulla, who was soon to become victorious? For if the gods did not help him to achieve these things, then it is no light matter to admit that men may acquire so much of that earthly felicity which they so dearly love even without the favour of their gods. It is no light matter to admit that such a man as Marius can amass and enjoy good health, strength, riches, honours, renown and long life in spite of the anger of the gods, whereas such men as Regulus can be tormented by captivity, servitude, poverty, sleeplessness and pain, and suffer death even though the gods are their friends. If our adversaries grant this much, they concede at once that the gods bring them no benefit and that their worship is superfluous. For it seems that the gods are eager for the people to learn the very opposite of those virtues of soul and righteous ways of life whose rewards are to be hoped for after death. It seems also that, with respect to transient and worldly goods, they do nothing either to injure those whom they hate or to benefit those whom they love. Why, then, are they worshipped? And why is the fact that they are not worshipped so grievously deplored? Why, in hard and sorrowful times, is it murmured that the gods have departed because they are offended, and the Christian religion subjected to the most unworthy reproaches for their sakes? For if they have power to do either good or harm in these matters, why did they assist Marius, the worst of men, in them, yet desert the excellent Regulus? In view of this, are they not to be deemed wholly unjust and wicked?

And let no one suppose that their injustice and wickedness is to be thought all the more reason for fearing and worshipping them. For we do not find that Regulus worshipped them any less than Marius. Let no one suppose either that, because the gods are thought to have shown more favour to Marius than to Regulus, a wicked life is to be preferred. For Metellus, most highly esteemed of Romans, had five sons who became consuls, and was fortunate in temporal affairs besides; whereas the evil Catiline was unfortunate: borne down with poverty and destroyed in a war brought about by his own wickedness. Moreover, the truest and most certain felicity is in any case possessed only by those who worship the true God, by Whom alone it can be conferred.

So, then: when the commonwealth was perishing because of its evil ways, the gods did nothing either to guide or correct its morals so that it might not perish. On the contrary, they lent such impetus to the depravity and corruption of its morals as to ensure its destruction. And let them not make themselves out to be good, as if they had withdrawn because offended by the iniquity of the citizens. Beyond doubt they were present; they are exposed, they are convicted: they could neither help by admonishing nor hide by remaining silent. I leave aside the fact that Marius was commended by the compassionate men of Minturnae to the goddess Marica in her grove, so that she might prosper him in all things, and that from a most desperate plight he returned to the city unharmed, in cruel command of a cruel army. Those who wish to do so may read in the works of those who have written on the subject how bloody his victory was: how unworthy of a citizen and how much more brutal than an enemy's.

But, as I have said, I leave this aside; nor do I attribute the bloodstained good fortune of Marius to Marica, or to I know not whom else, but rather to the hidden providence of God. For He shuts the mouths of our adversaries and frees from error those who are not actuated by prejudice but who prudently give heed to this truth: that, even though the demons may have some power in these matters, they can do only as much as is permitted them by the mysterious dispensation of the Almighty. This is so that we shall neither unduly value earthly happiness, which is often granted even to bad men like Marius, nor, on the other hand, pronounce it evil, since we see that many pious and good worshippers of the one true

God have enjoyed outstanding felicity in spite of the demons. Nor should we suppose that these same most unclean spirits are to be propitiated or feared for the sake of these earthly goods or evils. For, like wicked men on earth, they also cannot do all that they wish, but only as much as is allowed by the ordinance of Him Whose judgments no man wholly understands and no man justly condemns.

24 The deeds of Sulla, of which the demons showed themselves to be the helpers

In the case of Sulla himself – whose times were such that the earlier days of which he had seemed to be the avenger appeared desirable by comparison – it is established that, when he first marched upon the city from his camp against Marius, the entrails at his sacrifice were so auspicious that, as Livy writes, the diviner Postumius was willing to be imprisoned under sentence of death if Sulla did not attain his heart's desires with the help of the gods.³⁶ The gods, you notice, had not departed, 'forsaking shrine and altar'. On the contrary, they foretold the course of events. But they certainly did nothing to correct Sulla himself. By their forecasts they promised him great good fortune; but they did not by their warnings subdue his wicked greed. And later, when he was waging war in Asia against Mithridates, there came to him by Lucius Titus a message from Jupiter that Mithridates was soon to be overcome; and it was so. Later still, when he was preparing to return to the city to avenge with the blood of the citizens his own injuries and those of his friends, he again received a message from Jupiter, this time by a soldier of the sixth legion. The purport of this second message was that, just as Jupiter had earlier foretold his victory over Mithridates, he now promised to give him power to retrieve the commonwealth from his enemies; although not without much bloodshed. Sulla then enquired what kind of apparition the soldier had seen. When he described it, Sulla was reminded of what he had heard on the former occasion from the man who brought the message from the same source concerning the victory over Mithridates. The gods took

³⁶ The reference is to the lost Bk 77 of Livy; but the story also appears in Cicero, *De divin.*, 1,33,72, and Plutarch, *Sulla*, 9.

care to announce these events as though they were fortunate, then; but none of them took care to warn and correct Sulla. They took no such step even though Sulla was about to inflict such harm upon the commonwealth by the crime of civil war as not merely to damage it but to destroy it altogether. What explanation can there be of this? It is clear beyond doubt, as I have often said, and as we are warned in Holy Scripture, and as the facts themselves sufficiently attest, that the demons look after their own affairs: that is, they take care to be regarded and worshipped as gods. But the result is that both those to whom honour is done and those who do it will be bound together in one dreadful accusation at the Judgment Seat of God.

Again, when Sulla had come to Tarentum and sacrificed there, he saw on the apex of a calf's liver the image of a golden crown. And the diviner Postumius then interpreted this to mean that there was to be a resounding victory, and gave instructions that only Sulla was to eat of the sacrificial meal. Shortly thereafter, the slave of a certain Lucius Pontius cried out in prophecy: 'I come as the messenger of Bellona! Victory is thine, O Sulla!' And he then added that the Capitol would burn. When he had said this, he at once left the camp; but he returned the following day in a state of even greater agitation and cried out that the Capitol had burned; and the Capitol had indeed burned. For a demon, however, it was easy both to foresee this and to announce it with the greatest possible speed.

But – and this is the most telling part of our argument: notice carefully to what kind of gods those men wish to be subject who blaspheme against the Saviour by Whom the wills of the faithful are set free from the dominion of demons. The man cried out in prophecy, 'Victory is thine, O Sulla!' And, so that it might be believed that the cry came from a divine spirit, he also proclaimed that something would shortly happen, and then that it had happened, at a place far removed from him through whom the spirit spoke. But he never cried out, 'Abstain from crimes, O Sulla!' – from those horrible crimes which the victor committed even after a golden crown had appeared in the liver of a calf as a most glorious sign of Victory herself.

If those gods who made a practice of giving such signs had been righteous gods and not impious demons, then surely in those entrails they would rather have shown the future evils which were

to bring such grievous harm to Sulla himself. For that victory brought him more harm through greed than gain through honour. Through it, he became so immoderate in his desires, and so borne up by favourable circumstances, and then cast down, that his own moral ruin was greater than any bodily loss suffered by his enemies. Here were truly sorrowful, truly deplorable things; yet the gods foretold them neither by entrails nor auguries nor by anyone's dream or prophecy. After all, they had more to fear from Sulla's correction than from his defeat. Indeed, they were content that Sulla, though a glorious victor over his fellow citizens, should himself be conquered and held captive by shameful vices; for, through these things, he was made all the more hopelessly subject to the demons themselves.

25 How greatly the evil spirits incite men to wickedness when they lend authority to the commission of crimes by their own seemingly divine example

Who, then – other than someone who chooses rather to imitate such gods than be withdrawn from their fellowship by divine grace – would not understand from this instance how greatly these evil spirits strive by their example to supply a seemingly divine authority for crimes? Who would not see this? Once upon a time, on a broad plain in Campania, where not long afterwards citizen armies came together in awful combat, they were even seen to fight among themselves. At first, great crashing sounds were heard there. Then, shortly afterwards, many men reported that they had seen two armies fighting for several days. When this battle ceased, they also found marks there, as of men and horses, such as might have been imprinted by that conflict. If, therefore, the divine beings truly fought among themselves, the civil wars of human beings now at any rate have an excuse. Consider, though, the malice or misery of such gods! If, however, they only pretended to fight, is it not surely clear that they did this only so that the Romans, in waging civil war as if by the example of the gods, should seem to commit no wickedness? For the civil wars had by then broken out, and several atrocious battles had been fought, with terrible slaughter. Many were moved by the tale of a certain soldier who, stripping the armour

from one of the fallen, recognised the naked corpse of his own brother. He cursed the civil wars and then slew himself, uniting his own body with that of his brother.³⁷ In order, therefore, to reduce as far as possible the loathing occasioned by such great evils, and instead to inspire more and more delight in the weapons of war, the hurtful demons – the demons whom the Romans supposed to be gods and considered worthy of worship – chose to appear to men as fighting among themselves. They did this so that civic affection should not shrink from initiating such strife: they desired that human crimes should be excused by divine example.

With the same astuteness, the evil spirits also commanded that those theatrical displays of which I have already said a good deal should be dedicated and consecrated to themselves. They desired to have their crimes celebrated in musical performances and plays, so that a man, perceiving that the gods were delighted to have such things shown to them, might cheerfully imitate them whether he believed them true or not. Also, they did not wish anyone to suppose that the poets had reproached the gods rather than honoured them by what they wrote wherever they portrayed them as fighting among themselves. Thus, they confirmed the songs of the poets in order to deceive mankind: that is, by displaying their clashes to human eyes not only through actors in the theatre, but also in their own persons on the battlefield.

We have been moved to say these things by the fact that even their own authors have not at all hesitated to say and write that the commonwealth of the Romans had already been destroyed by the depraved morals of its citizens, and that nothing remained of it, long before the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. They do not impute this ruin to their own gods. To our Christ, however, they attribute transient evils by which good men cannot be destroyed regardless of whether they live or die. And they do this even though our Christ so often delivered precepts directed towards the highest morals and against wicked ways, whereas their gods never gave such precepts to the nation that worshipped them, to save that commonwealth from destruction. On the contrary, they made its destruction all the more certain by corrupting its morals by the harmful authority of their own example. And no one, I think, will venture to say

³⁷ Cf. Livy, 79; Plutarch, *Marius*, 39; Velleius Paterculus, *Hist. Rom.*, 2, 19.

that it perished because the gods departed, 'forsaking shrine and altar', as if they were lovers of virtue offended by the vices of men. For they are shown to have been present by the many signs derived from entrails, auguries and prophecies through which they so loved to vaunt and commend themselves as foretelling the future and helping in battle. Had they really departed, the Romans, inspired only by their own greed and not by the encouragement of the gods, might have shown more restraint in kindling their civil wars.

26 Of the moral instruction which the demons gave
in secret while in their rites every wickedness was
openly taught

Thus, the mingled infamies and cruelties, the scandals and crimes of the divine beings, whether real or feigned, have, at their own insistence, and to avoid incurring their displeasure, been publicly and openly consecrated and dedicated to them in fixed and established festivals. They have been exhibited to all eyes as objects worthy of imitation and fit to be seen. Clearly, by such spectacles, these demons confess themselves to be unclean spirits. By their own base and vicious deeds, whether actual or pretended, whose celebration they request from the shameless and demand from the modest, they attest themselves to be the teachers of a wicked and impure life. Why, then, are they nonetheless reputed to give certain good moral precepts to some few chosen initiates in their shrines and innermost chambers? If they do indeed do this, then the malice of these harmful spirits must be deemed all the more artful and deserving of condemnation. For so great is the force of probity and chastity that the whole, or nearly the whole, of humankind is moved to praise them; nor is there anyone so ruined by vice as to relinquish all sense of honour. Accordingly, unless they somewhere 'transformed themselves into angels of light',³⁸ as we find written in our Scriptures, the malice of the demons would not fully achieve its purpose of deception. Out of doors, therefore, foul impiety clamours unceasingly around the people on every hand, while, inside, a feigned chastity whispers to the few. Shameful things are furnished with a public stage and the praiseworthy are concealed; honour

³⁸ 2 Cor. 11,14.

hides and dishonour parades; when evil is on display, all assemble to watch; when good is spoken, scarcely anyone is found to listen. It is as if honourable things deserved to be blushed at and the dishonourable glorified. But where does this happen, save in the temples of the demons? Where, save in the dwelling-place of lies? For the secret teaching is intended to ensnare honest men, who are scarce, and the public exhibition of wickedness to keep the many, who are wholly base, from improvement.

Where and when the votaries of *Caelestis* received lessons in chastity I do not know. But before her shrine, where her image was set up, the crowd would gather from all sides and, each standing where he could, we would watch the plays being acted. We would see, as we looked this way and that, here a parade of harlots, there the virgin goddess: the latter worshipped with prayer and with disgraceful rites celebrated before her. But we saw no shamefaced actors, no actress any the more modest for being in her presence. All the offices of obscenity were performed. They knew what would please the virgin deity, and the wife who saw it returned home from the temple all the wiser. Some of the more modest women averted their faces from the obscene posturings of the actors and learnt the shameful art by furtive glances; shamed by the presence of men, they did not dare to gaze openly at unchaste acts. Much less, however, did they dare to condemn with chaste hearts the rites of her whom they venerated! Yet that act was openly represented in the temple, as a thing fit to be learnt there, which can only be done in the home with at least some semblance of privacy. Whatever mortal modesty was present greatly wondered at it that a kind of human wickedness which men may not freely commit elsewhere should be taught by the gods. Yet it was taught as a religious duty, on pain of incurring their wrath if a show of such things was not made!

There is an evil spirit who by secret incitement arouses the grossest thoughts, and both urges the act and is gratified by the commission of adultery. That spirit also takes pleasure in such rites as we have described. He sets up in the temples the images of demons. He loves to see vice portrayed in plays. And is it not he who whispers words of righteousness in secret, to deceive even the few good men while, in public, scattering invitations to vileness to gain possession of the countless wicked?

27 That the obscenity of the games celebrated to propitiate the Roman gods did much to undermine public discipline

When he was about to be made aedile, Cicero, who was a distinguished man and by way of being a philosopher, proclaimed for all the city to hear that among the other duties of his magistracy would be the propitiation of Mother Flora by the celebration of games.³⁹ By custom, these games were reckoned to be the more devout the more disgracefully they were celebrated. In another place, when he was now consul and the city was in dire peril, he said that the games had been in progress for ten days and that nothing belonging to the propitiation of the gods had been left undone.⁴⁰ As if it were not more fitting to annoy such gods by temperance than to pacify them with extravagance: to provoke them to hostility by righteousness rather than pandering to them with such disgrace! For no matter how frightful the cruelty which those men on account of whom the propitiation was being offered were about to inflict, it was not worse than what the gods themselves inflicted when they were appeased by such disgusting corruption. For, in order to avert what the enemy threatened to do to the body, the gods were placated by means which defeated virtue in the mind. They would not come forward as defenders of the city walls against the invaders without first themselves becoming the enemies of good morals.

This propitiation of such deities was so wholly wanton, impure, immodest, wicked and unclean that the actors who performed it were, by the praiseworthy native virtue of the Romans, excluded from public office, expelled from their tribes, recognised as base and declared infamous. This shameful propitiation of such deities was, I say, inimical and detestable to true religion. Yet the whole city learnt these stories of the seductions and crimes of the gods: these ignominious tales of deeds which the gods either viciously and foully did or even more viciously and foully invented for the eyes and ears of the public. The Romans perceived that these deeds were pleasing to the divine beings, and so they believed them not only worthy of display to the gods, but also worthy of imitation by them—

³⁹ Cicero, 2 *Verr.*, 5, 14, 36.

⁴⁰ *In Catil.*, 3, 8.

selves. And I know nothing of that purportedly good and honest teaching which, if it was given at all, was given to so few and so secretly that the gods seemed rather to fear that it might be disclosed than that it might not be practised.

28 Of the wholesomeness of the Christian religion

The perverse and ungrateful, held ever more deeply and obdurately in bondage to that abominable spirit, complain and murmur because men are plucked from the infernal yoke of these most unclean powers through Christ's name. They complain that men are redeemed from fellowship with the demons in punishment, and carried from the darkness of ruinous impiety into the light of most wholesome godliness. They complain because, in chaste observance and with a decent separation of each sex, the people flock to church, where they hear how they should live well at the present time so that they may deserve to live in eternal blessedness after this life: where Holy Scripture and instruction in righteousness are preached from on high in the sight of all; and where those who obey may hear it to their profit, and those who do not obey may hear it to their condemnation. Some, indeed, come only to laugh at such teaching; but all their impudence is either abandoned in a sudden change or restrained by fear or shame. For no foul or disgraceful spectacle or example is ever presented when the teachings of the true God are expounded, or His miracles told, or His gifts praised, or His blessings sought.

29 An exhortation to the Romans to abandon the worship of the gods

Desire these things, then, O admirable Roman character – O offspring of the Reguli, Scaevolae, Scipios, Fabricii: desire these things instead; distinguish them from the most shameful emptiness and deceitful malignity of the demons. If by nature there is anything in you truly worthy of praise, it will be purged and perfected by true godliness alone, and by impiety it will be ruined and brought to punishment. Choose now which you will follow, so that your praise may be not in yourself, but in the true God in Whom there is no

error. Once upon a time, the adulation of the peoples was with you, but by the hidden judgment of divine providence the true religion was withheld from your choice. Awake, it is day! You have, indeed, awakened already in some of your people, in whose perfect virtue and suffering for the faith we Christians glory indeed. These people, striving against the most hostile powers on every hand, and triumphing through fearless death, have 'purchased this country for us with their blood'.⁴¹

To this country we invite you, then; we entreat you to enrol yourselves in the number of the citizens of that place whose sanctuary, as it were, is the true remission of sins. Do not listen to your degenerate countrymen who revile Christ and the Christians. They long for times, not of quiet living, but of secure wickedness, and so they accuse us as though the times were evil rather than themselves. These things were never pleasing to you or of profit to your earthly country. Seize now the Heavenly Country, for the sake of which you will toil only a little, and in which you will truly reign eternally. You will find no Vestal flame there, and no stone statue of Jupiter on the Capitol. But you will find the one and true God, Who 'will set no bounds or duration to your estate, but will grant empire without end'.⁴²

Do not desire false and deceitful gods. Abjure these: despise them, and spring forth into true liberty. They are not gods; they are malignant spirits, to whom your eternal felicity is a punishment. Juno, from whom you trace your fleshly origin, was not seen to begrudge the possession of the Roman citadel to the Trojans more than these demons begrudge the whole human race an eternal throne; yet you still hold them to be gods! But you yourselves gave no small judgment against such spirits when you propitiated them with plays, yet declared infamous the men by whom those plays were performed. Allow your liberty to be asserted against the unclean spirits who imposed upon your necks the burden of worshipping them as sacred and celebrating their own dishonour. You excluded the performers of those divine crimes from public office; now beseech the true God to exclude from you those gods who take delight in their crimes, whether true, in which case wholly

⁴¹ Virgil, *Aen.*, 11,24f.

⁴² *Aen.*, 1,278f

shameful, or false, in which case wholly malign. Well done, to have refused of your own accord to allow the fellowship of the city to actors and players. But be yet more vigilant. The Divine Majesty is in no way propitiated by those arts which affront human dignity. How, then, can gods who take delight in such obsequies be deemed to belong to the covenant of the Holy Powers of Heaven, when the men by whom these same obsequies are performed are not deemed to be included in the number of Roman citizens of whatever class? Incomparably fairer is that Supernal City where victory is truth, where dignity is holiness, where peace is happiness and where life is eternity. Much less does it have such gods in its fellowship, if you blushed to have such men in yours! If you desire to approach the Blessed City, then, shun the fellowship of demons. Those who are propitiated by the base are not worthy to be worshipped by the honourable. So let these spirits be excluded from your piety by Christian cleansing, just as those men are excluded from your public honours by the censor's ban.

But, as to fleshly goods, which are all that the wicked wish to enjoy, and fleshly evils, which are all that they wish to avoid: even in this case the demons do not have the power that they are reputed to have. (Although, if they did, we ought rather to despise these goods also than to worship demons for the sake of them, and, by worshipping them, become unable to attain to the things which they begrudge us.) And we shall see in what follows that they do indeed lack the power over material things which men impute to them: power over those very things for the sake of which, it is contended, they ought to be worshipped. This, however, is the end of the present book.

Book III

I Of those adversities which are the only kind of evils that the wicked fear, yet which the world always suffered while it worshipped the gods

Enough has now been said, I suppose, of those moral and spiritual evils which are especially to be shunned, to show that the false gods of the Romans did nothing to help the people who worshipped them to avoid oppression by the weight of such ills. On the contrary, they caused them to be oppressed by them in ever greater measure. Now, I see, I must speak of the only kind of evils which our adversaries are unwilling to endure: that is, famine, disease, war, pillage, captivity, slaughter and the similar things which we have already mentioned in the first book. For evil men regard as evils only those things which do not make men evil. They do not blush to praise good things yet to remain evil themselves even among the good things that they praise. It vexes them more to have a bad house than a bad life, as if the greatest good for a man were to have everything good but himself.

Even when the Romans worshipped them freely, however, their gods did not prevent the occurrence of those material ills which are all that they dread. For at various times and in different places before the advent of our Redeemer, the human race was consumed by innumerable and, in not a few cases, incredible disasters. Yet at that time (apart from the one Hebrew nation and some few other persons who were found worthy of divine grace by the most hidden and just judgment of God) what gods but these did the world worship? In order not to be unduly tedious, however, I shall remain silent as to the most grave evils suffered by other nations everywhere. I shall speak only of those which befell Rome and the Roman empire: that is, the city properly so called and the territories which, before the coming of Christ, had been joined to her by alliance or subjected to her by conquest, and had thus become, as it were, the body of the commonwealth.

2 Whether the gods who were worshipped by the Greeks and Romans alike had good reasons for allowing the destruction of Ilium

First of all, I must not pass over or suppress what I have already touched upon in the first book.¹ Why, then, was Troy or Ilium, from which the Roman people derive their origin, conquered, captured and destroyed by the Greeks even though its people worshipped the same gods as they did? Priam, they say, paid the penalty for the perjury of his father Laomedon.² Is it true, then, that Apollo and Neptune served that same Laomedon as paid labourers?³ For it is said that Laomedon promised them wages and then broke his oath. I wonder at it that Apollo, who is celebrated for his ability to foresee the future, toiled at so great a task without knowing that Laomedon was intending to dishonour his promise. Nor, for that matter, should his uncle Neptune, brother of Jupiter and lord of the sea, have been ignorant of what was about to happen. For Homer, a poet who is said to have lived before the founding of the city of Rome, introduces Neptune as foreseeing that some great thing would come forth from the stock of Aeneas, by whose posterity Rome was founded.⁴ Homer says that Neptune caught Aeneas up in a cloud so that Achilles should not slay him; and he did this even though, as is admitted in the words of Virgil, he himself 'Desired to overthrow from top to bottom the perjured walls of Troy, the work of his own hands.'⁵

Such great gods as Neptune and Apollo, then, not knowing that Laomedon would refuse to pay their wages, built the walls of Troy without pay for an ungrateful people. Let our adversaries consider whether it is not a worse mistake to believe in such gods than to cheat them! Even Homer himself did not find the story easy to believe. For he represents Neptune, indeed, as fighting against the Trojans, yet Apollo as fighting for them, even though, in the story, both were injured by the dishonoured oath. If, therefore, our adversaries believe such tales, let them blush to worship such divine

¹ Bk 1,3; 4.

² Virgil, *Aen.*, 4,542; *Georg.*, 1,502.

³ Homer, *Iliad*, 21,441ff, cf. Horace, *Carm.*, 4,3,18ff.

⁴ *Iliad*, 20,293ff.

⁵ *Aen.*, 5,810f.

beings. If they do not believe such tales, then let them not put forward Trojan perjury as an excuse for the behaviour of the gods in punishing Troy. Or let them wonder why the gods punished the perjury of Troy yet approved that of Rome. For how did the conspiracy of Catiline find, even in so great and so deeply corrupted a city, such a plentiful supply of men 'who, by hand or tongue, lived by means of perjury and civic bloodshed'?⁶ Again, what else but the sin of perjury corrupted the judgment of so many senators, or the votes of so many of the people, or their verdicts in the causes tried before the assembly? For even when morals were at their most corrupt, the ancient custom of oath-taking was preserved. The result, however, was not that men were restrained from wickedness by religious fear, but that to their other crimes was added that of perjury.

3 That the gods could not have been offended by the adultery of Paris; for it is reported that they often committed adultery themselves

There is, then, no reason to suppose that it was because they were angered by Trojan perjury that the gods allowed Troy to be conquered by the Greeks: the gods by whom, as they say,⁷ that empire stood. Nor, as some say in their defence,⁸ can it be that they were outraged by the adultery of Paris, and forsook Troy for that reason. For, as a rule, they are the authors and teachers of sin, not its avengers. 'The city of Rome', Sallust says, 'was, as I understand it, founded and first inhabited by Trojans who, as exiles under the captaincy of Aeneas, had wandered about without any certain homes'.⁹ If, therefore, the divine beings judged that the adultery of Paris ought to be avenged, then it was chiefly the Romans, or at least the Romans as well as the Trojans, who should have been punished. For the adultery was committed by Aeneas's mother. But how is it that they hated the sin in the case of Paris, whereas they did not hate it in the case of their sister Venus (not to mention

⁶ Sallust, *Catil.*, 14.

⁷ *Aen.*, 2,352.

⁸ *Aen.*, 2,601ff.

⁹ *Catil.*, 6,1.

other cases) when she committed it with Anchises, and so gave birth to Aeneas? Is this because, in the one case, Menelaus was aggrieved, whereas, in the other, Vulcan connived at it? For the gods, I believe, are so little inclined to be jealous of their wives that they even see fit to possess them in common with men.

But perhaps I may be thought to be mocking these stories, and not treating so weighty a matter with proper gravity. If you prefer, then, let us believe that Aeneas was not the son of Venus. Behold, I concede this; but on condition that Romulus is not the son of Mars either; for if the one, why not the other? Or is it lawful for the gods to have intercourse with women, but wicked for men to do so with goddesses? It would be a harsh – or, rather, an incredible – condition, if what was allowed to Mars under the law of Venus was not allowed to Venus under her own law. Both cases, however, are confirmed by the authority of Rome. For, in more recent times, Caesar believed that Venus was his grandmother no less than Romulus in times gone by believed Mars to be his father.¹⁰

4 Of the opinion of Varro, who said that it is advantageous to men to claim falsely that they are the offspring of the gods

Someone will say: 'Do you really believe all this?' Of course I do not believe it. After all, Varro himself, our adversaries' most learned man, comes close to admitting that these stories are false, even though he does not do so boldly and with confidence. He asserts, however, that it is advantageous for states if brave men believe, albeit falsely, that they are the offspring of the gods. For, in this case, the minds of men, borne up by the assurance that they are of divine stock, boldly undertake enterprises of great magnitude, carry them through all the more forcefully, and by their very confidence fulfil them with greater success. You see what a broad scope is opened up for falsehood by this statement of Varro's, which I have expressed as well as I can in my own words. When lies even about the very gods are deemed to bring advantage to the citizens, we may infer from this that many beliefs now regarded as sacred and religious have been invented.

¹⁰ Suetonius, *Divus Julius*, 6.

5 That it is not proved that the gods punished the adultery of Paris; for they did not avenge that of Romulus's mother

But whether Venus could have borne Aeneas as a result of her intercourse with Anchises, or Mars have begotten Romulus by lying with the daughter of Numitor: we leave these questions undecided. For much the same question also arises in our own Scriptures: whether the fallen angels coupled with the daughters of men, as a result of which the earth was filled with giants; that is, with exceedingly large and strong men.¹¹ For the time being, our discussion may be confined to the following dilemma. If, on the one hand, the stories often read among the Romans concerning the mother of Aeneas and the father of Romulus are true, how can the gods be displeased with men for their adulteries when, among themselves, they bear them with equanimity? If, on the other hand, these stories are false, they cannot even then be angry at actual human adulteries when they take pleasure in their own, even though the latter are fictitious. What is more, if we are not to believe the adultery of Venus, and so not that of Mars either, then the mother of Romulus cannot rely on the defence of intercourse with a god as an excuse in her own case. She was, moreover, a priestess of Vesta, and so the gods ought to have avenged that sacrilegious offence on the Romans more severely than they did Paris's adultery on the Trojans. For the ancient Romans themselves were so much more at pains to vindicate the purity of the shrines which they deemed divine than that of the human marriage bed that they buried alive Vestals detected in unchastity. By contrast, ordinary women found guilty of adultery, though condemned to some punishment, were nonetheless never put to death.

6 Of the fratricide of Romulus, which the gods did not avenge

I adduce a further example. If the sins of men so displeased the divine beings that, offended at the deed of Paris, they forsook Troy and gave it up to fire and the sword, the murder of Romulus's

¹¹ Gen. 6,4.

brother surely ought to have incited them more against the Romans than the deceiving of a Greek husband did against the Trojans. Murder in a newly founded city should have moved them to anger more than adultery in one already flourishing. And for the purposes of what we are here discussing, does it matter whether Romulus ordered the deed to be done or whether Romulus did it himself? Many impudently deny this latter possibility, and many through shame doubt it, and many through sorrow conceal it. As to this, however, we shall not pause to enquire of the many who have written on the subject and to weigh their testimony. It is established as a matter of public knowledge that the brother of Romulus was slain neither by enemies nor by strangers. Regardless of whether Romulus actually perpetrated the deed himself or only commanded it, he was in a greater position of authority over the Romans than Paris was over the Trojans. Why, then, did the abductor of another man's wife provoke the wrath of the gods against the Trojans, while the slayer of his own brother secured for the Romans the protection of those same gods?¹²

But even if that crime was not committed either by Romulus or at his command, it should in any case have been avenged. Thus, the city as a whole committed the crime which as a whole it overlooked. In this sense, then, it slew not its brother, but its father, which is worse. For each of the two brothers was a founder of the city; but one of the two, being made away with, was not permitted to be a ruler in it. As I judge it, then, there is no evil to be attributed to Troy great enough to warrant the gods in abandoning her to destruction; nor is there any good in Rome great enough to account for the gods dwelling there to bring her prosperity: unless, being vanquished, the gods fled from Troy and resorted to the Romans in order to cheat them too. They also remained in Troy, however, so that, according to their custom, they might deceive those who should once again dwell in those lands; while here at Rome, by a still greater exercise of their treacherous arts, they rejoiced in ever greater honours.

¹² Cf. Cicero, *De offic.*, 3,40; Livy, 1,67; Horace, *Epod.*, 7,17f.

7 Of the destruction of Ilium wrought by Fimbria, Marius's captain

Surely, however, we may ask what crime poor Ilium had committed that, when the Roman civil wars broke out, she should be destroyed once more: this time by Fimbria, the worst of the men in Marius's faction? By him, indeed, she was destroyed even more ferociously and cruelly than she had been by the Greeks of old. For, on the former occasion, many fled and many at least remained alive, even though in servitude. By contrast, Fimbria issued an edict beforehand that no one was to be spared. Then, setting fire to the whole city, he consumed it all, and all its inhabitants together.

Thus was Ilium rewarded: not by the Greeks whom she had angered by her own iniquity, but by the Romans who owed their origin to her earlier calamity. For their part, the gods whom the Trojans and the Romans worshipped in common either did nothing to help the Trojans avert this fate, or – which is the truth of the matter – had no power to do so. Did it happen on that occasion also, then, after Troy had recovered from the fire and ruin formerly inflicted by the Greeks, that the gods by whose help the city stood once more departed, 'forsaking shrine and altar'?¹³

If they did indeed depart, then I ask the reason; and in proportion as I find the conduct of the citizens to have been better on the first than on the second occasion, so much the worse do I find that of the gods. For the citizens had closed the gates against Fimbria in order to preserve the city intact for Sulla. This is what angered him so much that he set fire to it or, rather, extinguished it entirely. Moreover, up to this time, Sulla was the leader of the better faction; for he had until now used his armed force to restore the commonwealth, and his good beginnings had not yet met with their bad end. What better thing, therefore, could the citizens of that city have done – what more honourable thing, what more faithful, what more worthy of their filial obligations to Rome – than to preserve the city for the better Roman cause and to close their gates against the parricide of the Roman commonwealth?

But let those who defend the gods note how great a ruin this brought upon the people of Ilium. On the first occasion, the gods

¹³ *Aen.*, 2,35 ff.

had deserted an adulterous people and abandoned Ilium to the fires of the Greeks so that a more chaste Rome might be born from her ashes. But why did they subsequently desert this same city again, now allied to the Romans? Ilium had not rebelled against her noble daughter Rome. On the contrary, she had preserved a most constant and pious fidelity to the more just of her factions. Why, then, did the gods abandon her to destruction, not by the stalwart heroes of the Greeks, but by the very worst of the Romans? Or, if the gods were displeased by Sulla's faction, in the interests of which the wretched Trojans closed their gates, why did they promise and foretell such good things for that same Sulla? Or are they once again revealed as flattering the fortunate and failing to defend the unfortunate?

But it was not, in fact, because she was deserted by the gods that Troy was once again destroyed. For the demons, always vigilant to deceive, did all that they were able to do. Indeed, Livy records that when all the other idols were destroyed and burnt with the city, only that of Minerva is said to have been found standing intact in the great ruin of her temple.¹⁴ But this survival did not come about so that it should be possible for men to speak in praise of 'the country's gods, under whose divine presence Troy forever stands'.¹⁵ Rather, it came about only so that it might not be said in their defence that 'All the gods upon whom this realm stood have gone, forsaking shrine and altar.' The gods were permitted to exercise a certain amount of power, not in order to demonstrate their might, but only so that they might be convicted of being present.

8 Whether Rome ought to have been entrusted to the Trojan gods

How, then, was it in any way prudent to entrust Rome to the custody of Ilium's gods after this demonstration of their efficacy in the case of Troy herself? Will someone say that when Troy was stormed and taken by Fimbria, the gods were by now already dwelling in Rome? How, then, did the image of Minerva remain standing? But if they were already at Rome when Fimbria destroyed Ilium, were

¹⁴ Livy, 83.

¹⁵ *Aen.*, 9, 247.

they perhaps at Ilium when Rome herself was taken and burnt by the Gauls? Because they have very acute hearing and are able to move swiftly, however, they returned quickly when they heard the voices of the geese, in order to protect at least the Capitoline Hill, which remained untaken. But the warning came too late for them to return in time to defend the rest of the city.

9 Whether we are to believe that the peace which prevailed during the reign of Numa was due to the protection of the gods

The gods are also believed to have helped Numa Pompilius, the successor of Romulus, to have peace during the whole time of his reign and to close the gates of Janus, which customarily stand open in time of war. He deserved this help, of course, because he established for the Romans many sacred rites. That man might indeed have merited congratulation for enjoying so great a leisure had he been wise enough to devote it to wholesome ends and, abandoning his most pernicious curiosity, to seek with true godliness the true God. As it is, however, it seems not that the gods brought him this leisure, but that they would perhaps have deceived him less if they had found him with less leisure. For the less occupied they found him, the more were they able to occupy his attention themselves. Varro tells us what Numa undertook and by what acts he sought to associate the gods with himself and the city. In their proper place, if it please God, these things will be discussed with greater care.¹⁶ For the time being, however, the question is whether these exertions brought any benefit.

Peace is indeed a great benefit, but it is a benefit which comes from the true God. Like the sun and rain and the other things which sustain this life, it is commonly bestowed even upon the ungrateful and wicked.¹⁷ But if so great a good was conferred upon Rome or Pompilius by the gods, why did they not subsequently bestow it upon the Roman empire even at the times when Rome was most worthy of praise? Were the sacred rites more efficacious at the time of their institution than when they were celebrated after

¹⁶ Bk VII, 34.

¹⁷ Cf. Matt. 5, 45.

their institution? In Numa's time they were not yet in being: they were brought into being when he introduced them. In later times, when they were already in being, they were cherished so that they might bring profit. How is it, then, that those forty-three years – or, as others prefer it, thirty-nine years – of Numa's reign were spent in such great peace, yet afterwards, when the sacred rites were long established and the gods invoked by those rites were the patrons and guardians of the city, there was so little peace? For of the many years from the founding of the city down to the time of Augustus, there was only one – the year, commemorated as a great wonder, following the end of the first Punic War – during which the Romans were able to close the gates of war.

10 Whether it was desirable for the Roman empire
to be increased by such a frenzy of warfare when it
could have remained quiet and secure by the policy
that was pursued under Numa

Do our adversaries reply that the Roman empire could never have been spread so far and wide, nor could its fame have been so greatly proclaimed, had it not been for the waging of constant and unremitting war? A worthy argument indeed! Why must an empire be unquiet in order to be great? Consider the human body. Is it not enough to have moderate stature with good health? Or is it better to attain gigantic size yet, having attained it, to find no rest, but to be plagued with ills which are greater in proportion to the size of the body's members? How would it have been an evil state of affairs – how, indeed, would it have been anything other than good – if those times recorded by Sallust had remained in being? He says, 'At first, kings (for that name was first used for the right to rule on earth) were different from one another in character; for some cultivated the mind and others the body. Also, men still lived lives free from greed, and each was well enough pleased with what was his.'¹⁸ Was so great an extension of empire worth the state of things that Virgil so deplures when he says, 'Little by little, there came a baser, paler age, bringing both the fury of war and the love of gain.'¹⁹

¹⁸ *Catil.*, 2.

¹⁹ *Aen.*, 8,326f.

Clearly, however, the Romans did have a just defence for undertaking and waging such great wars. They were compelled to resist the savage incursions of their enemies; and they were compelled to do this not by greed for human praise, but by the necessity of defending life and liberty. This much is plain enough; for, as Sallust himself writes,

When their state, sustained by laws, customs and land, was seen to be wealthy and powerful, envy arose out of prosperity, as it does in most of the affairs of mortal men. Neighbouring kings and peoples therefore undertook warfare. Only a few allies gave assistance, for the rest were stricken with fear and shunned the peril. But the Romans, alert both at home and in the field, made haste and prepared. They rallied one another, marched forth to meet the enemy, and defended their liberty, their fatherland and their families with arms. Afterwards, when by their valour they had repulsed the danger, they brought aid to their allies and friends, and established friendships more by conferring benefits than by receiving them.²⁰

When Rome increased by these means, she did so honourably. But was so long a peace maintained during Numa's reign despite the incursions and attacks of wicked men? Or was such enduring peace possible because such attacks were not being mounted? On the one hand, perhaps Rome was molested by attacks at that time also, yet did not meet force with force because she had some means of keeping her foes in check without defeating them in battle or intimidating them with any martial onset. In this case, however, such means could surely have been used at other times also, and thus Rome might have reigned in peace for ever, with the gates of Janus always closed. On the other hand, if it was not in her power to do this, then Rome enjoyed peace not at the will of her gods, but at the will of her neighbours on every side. She enjoyed peace, that is, only for as long as they did not provoke her to war: unless, perhaps, the gods will have the effrontery to claim that they can sell to one man something that depends upon what other men choose to do or not do. Insofar as they are permitted to do so, these gods can indeed terrify or incite the minds of wicked men by means of their own peculiar wickedness. But if they always had the power to

²⁰ *Catil.*, 6.

influence men's minds, and if they were not frequently thwarted by the acts of a more mysterious and higher Power, then they would always have it in their own power to determine peace and victory in war; for these things almost always come about through the motions of men's minds. Very often, however, peace and victory come about in spite of the will of the gods. And this is shown not only by lying fables which contain scarcely any truth either in word or symbol, but by the history of Rome itself.

11 Of the statue of Apollo at Cumae, whose tears are
believed to have portended disaster to the Greeks,
whom he was unable to help

Such weakness is, after all, admitted when it is said that the statue of Apollo at Cumae wept for four days when war was waged against the Achaeans and King Aristonicus.²¹ When, in terror at this prodigy, the soothsayers had decided that the statue should be thrown into the sea, the old men of Cumae intervened. They reported that such a prodigy had also occurred in association with the same statue during the war with Antiochus and Perseus; and they testified that, because the outcome had proved favourable to the Romans, gifts had been sent by them to that same Apollo by decree of the Senate. Then were summoned soothsayers reckoned to be more proficient than the others, and these pronounced that the weeping of the statue of Apollo was a sign favourable to the Romans. The reason for this was that Cumae was a Greek colony, and Apollo's weeping signified grief and calamity for his own land, from which he had been brought: that is, for Greece herself. Shortly thereafter, it was announced that King Aristonicus had been defeated and captured: a defeat certainly unwished for by Apollo and grievous to him, as he had indeed shown by the tears wept by his own stone statue.

Hence, though fabulous, the songs of the poets nonetheless describe the behaviour of the demons in a way that is not always at odds with the truth. Thus, in Virgil, Diana mourned for Camilla and Hercules wept for Pallas, soon to die.²² This, perhaps, is the

²¹ Julius Obsequens, *Liber prodig.*, 87; Cicero, *De divm.*, 1.43.98. (Augustine here confuses the war against the Achaean League, which ended in 146 BC, and that against Aristonicus of Pergamum, which ended in 129 BC.)

²² *Aen.*, 11.836ff; 10.464f.

reason why Numa Pompilius, who enjoyed abundant peace but did not know or ask Who gave it, chose as he did when he considered at his leisure to what gods he should commit the protection and wellbeing of Rome. He did not guess that it is the true and almighty and supreme God Who has care of these earthly things; and he remembered that the Trojan gods whom Aeneas had brought with him had not been able to preserve either the kingdom of Troy or that of Lavinium, founded by Aeneas himself, for any length of time. He therefore concluded that he must provide other gods in addition to those earlier ones who had come over to Rome with Romulus, or when Alba was destroyed: either to prevent them from fleeing or to assist them in their weakness.

12 How many gods the Romans added in addition to those established by Numa, and that such a quantity of gods helped them not at all

Rome did not, however, think it proper to rest content with the rites established by Pompilius, even though they were so numerous. Jupiter did not yet have his supreme temple: it was Tarquin the king who erected the Capitol.²³ Aesculapius also left Epidaurus for Rome,²⁴ so that this most accomplished physician might practise his art with greater glory in the noblest of cities. The mother of the gods came from Pessinus (I do not know where that is); for it was unworthy, now that her son presided on the Capitoline Hill, that she should still be hidden in some unworthy place. If, however, she is the mother of all the gods, she not only followed some of her children to Rome, but also preceded others, who were soon to follow her. But I wonder if she herself gave birth to Cynocephalus, who long afterwards came from Egypt; and whether the goddess Fever was also born of her is a matter for her grandson Aesculapius to decide. Whatever the circumstances of her own birth may have been, however, no foreign gods will, I suppose, presume to call ignoble a goddess who is a Roman citizen.

Who, then, can count the many gods who thus protected Rome? Native gods and alien, celestial, terrestrial, gods of the infernal

²³ Livy, 10,47.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

regions, of the seas, of fountains, of rivers, and, as Varro says, gods 'certain and uncertain';²⁵ and, in every class, just as among the animals, male and female gods. Founded as she was under the tutelage of so many gods, Rome surely should not have been assailed and afflicted by such great and horrible calamities, of which I shall mention only a few out of the many. For by the great smoke of her sacrifices, as by a given signal, she summoned to her protection all the many gods for whom she established and provided temples, altars, sacrifices and priests: thereby offending, however, the most high and true God, to Whom alone these rites were justly due. In fact, Rome had lived more happily when she had had fewer gods. But, as she became greater, she considered that she should acquire more gods, just as a bigger ship needs more sailors. She despaired, I believe, of those few gods under whom, in comparison with her worse life to come, she had lived well, deeming them insufficient for the defence of her greatness.

Even under the kings, however – with the exception of Numa Pompilius, of whom I have already spoken above – there was wicked and discordant rivalry among the Romans from the first: rivalry of the kind which had brought about the slaying of Romulus's brother.

13 By what right or treaty the Romans obtained their first wives

Also, how is it that neither Juno, who with her husband Jupiter cherished 'the Romans, lords of the world, the nation of the toga',²⁶ nor even Venus, could help the sons of Aeneas to acquire wives for themselves by good and just means? So complete was the helplessness of the gods that the Romans seized their women by force. Thus, they were soon compelled to fight with their fathers-in-law, and the miserable women, not yet reconciled to the injury done them by their husbands, now received their fathers' blood as dowry. In that conflict, the Romans indeed conquered their neighbours; but such victories were purchased only with great injuries to kinsfolk and neighbours alike, and many burials. The war between Caesar and Pompey was waged between only one father-in-law and

²⁵ See Bk vii, 17.

²⁶ *Aen.*, i, 281f.

one son-in-law. Yet even here, when Caesar's daughter, Pompey's wife, died, Lucan was moved by deep and righteous grief to cry out, 'The struggle on Emathia's plains is worse than civil war: our song is one of wickedness claiming to be just!'²⁷

The Romans, therefore, conquered so that they might with hands imbued with the blood of fathers wrest embraces from their sorrowing daughters. For their part, the daughters did not dare to mourn for their slain fathers for fear of offending their victorious husbands. Indeed, while the battle was being waged, they did not know whom to pray for. It was not Venus but Bellona who bestowed such marriages upon the Romans. Or perhaps that hellish fury Allecto had more licence to harm them, now that Juno was helping them, than she had had when Juno's prayers incited her against Aeneas.²⁸ Andromache was happier in her captivity than those Roman brides were at their weddings. For, though Andromache was a slave, yet, after he had embraced her, Pyrrhus slew no more Trojans. The Romans, however, still slew in battle the fathers-in-law whose daughters they had embraced in the marriage-bed. Andromache, even though enslaved by the victor, had need only to mourn, and not to fear, the death of her people. But the Sabine women, related as they were to both the warring parties, feared the death of their fathers when their husbands went forth to battle, and mourned it when they returned, yet were not at liberty to either fear or mourn. For either they were tormented by dutiful grief at the destruction of their fellow-citizens, kinsfolk, brothers and fathers, or they cruelly rejoiced in the victories of their husbands. Moreover, since the fortunes of war are fickle, some of them lost their husbands by the sword of their parents, while others lost parent and husband together by each other's swords.

Nor, indeed, were these crises any small matter for the Romans themselves. Eventually, they arrived at a stage where their city was being besieged and they were defending it from behind closed gates. Then, when these gates were opened by deception and the enemy admitted within the walls, a dreadful and most atrocious battle was fought in the forum itself: a battle between fathers-in-law and sons-in-law. The abductors were overcome and, fleeing in great numbers

²⁷ *Phars.*, 1, 1 f.

²⁸ *Aen.*, 7, 323 ff.

among the houses, gravely besmirched their earlier victories – even though these victories were themselves shameful and deplorable. At this point, however, Romulus, now despairing of the courage of his men, prayed to Jupiter that they might stand fast; and, from this occasion, Jupiter received his title of Stator.²⁹ But the evil day would not have ended even there, had not the ravished women dashed out with flying hair and, flinging themselves down before their fathers, stilled their just anger not by force of arms, but with pious supplication. Romulus, who had been unwilling to accept his own brother as his fellow-ruler, was then forced to accept Titus Tatius, king of the Sabines, as his colleague. But how long would he tolerate this arrangement, when he could not endure even his own brother? And so, Tatius being slain, Romulus became sole king, so that he might presently become a still greater god.

What marriage-laws were these, what incitements to war, what ties of kinship, affinity, fellowship or divinity! And, finally, what a civic life, under the tutelage of so many gods! You see how many weighty things might be said here, were it not our purpose to deal with matters as yet outstanding, for the sake of which we must now hasten our discourse on to other topics.

14 Of the impiety of the war which the Romans waged against the Albans, and of the victories gained through their lust for mastery

After Numa, what occurred next, under the other kings? What a great evil it was, when the Albans were provoked into war: not only for them, but for the Romans also! And this came to pass, no doubt, because the long peace of Numa had come to seem worth little. How frequently were massacres suffered by the Roman and Alban armies alike, and how great was the impoverishment of both cities! For that very Alba which Ascanius, the son of Aeneas, had founded – a city which was more truly Rome's mother than Troy – was provoked into conflict by the Roman king Tullus Hostilius. And, in that conflict, she both suffered and inflicted harm until both sides wearied of so many clashes in which each suffered equally. Then, they resolved to determine the outcome of the war

²⁹ Livy, I, 12

by a contest of two sets of three brothers, one set from each side. From the Roman ranks there came forth the three Horatii and, from the Alban, the three Curiatii. Two of the Horatii were slain by the three Curiatii, but the remaining Horatius defeated and killed the three Curiatii. And so Rome emerged victorious, but at such disastrous cost that, even in the final contest, only one of the six returned home. And who suffered the loss on both sides? Whom did such grief befall but the stock of Aeneas, the posterity of Ascanius, the offspring of Venus, the grandsons of Jupiter? For when daughter city fought with mother city, this was indeed a state of affairs 'worse than civil war'.

To the final combat of the sets of three brothers there was added another atrocious and horrible evil. For, at first, the two peoples had been friends, being, indeed, both neighbours and kin; and a sister of the Horatii had been betrothed to one of the Curiatii. But because she afterwards wept when she saw the arms of her betrothed borne home as spoils by her victorious brother, she was slain by that same brother! To my mind, this one woman, who showed such affection, had more humanity than the entire Roman people. I do not judge her worthy of blame for weeping over the man to whom she already owed half her faith. Perhaps, indeed, she also wept for the brother who had slain the man to whom he had promised his sister. Why is it, then, that, in Virgil, Aeneas 'the Pious' is found worthy of praise for mourning an enemy whom he had killed with his own hand?³⁰ Why did Marcellus weep with compassion when he contemplated the city of Syracuse: when he reflected that, but a moment ago, it had been at the height of its glory, and then had been suddenly destroyed by his own hand; and when he contemplated the common lot of mankind? Surely, in the name of human affection, we may entreat that, if men are to be praised for weeping over enemies whom they themselves have vanquished, a woman may without reproach weep for her betrothed, slain by her own brother! Yet while that woman was mourning the death of her betrothed at the hand of her brother, Rome herself was rejoicing: rejoicing that she had waged war against her mother city with such great slaughter, and had conquered by the effusion of so much kindred blood on both sides!

³⁰ *Aen.*, 10,821 ff.

Why do our adversaries plead the words 'praise' and 'victory' to me? Take off the cloak of vain opinion, and let such evil deeds be examined naked. Let them be weighed naked and judged naked. Let the cause against Alba be stated, just as that of adultery was stated against Troy. No such cause is to be found, however: no similar charge. The only reason for the war was so that 'Tullus might move his idle people to war, and march his unaccustomed troops to victory.'³¹ It was because of this wrongful purpose, then, that the great wickedness of war between allies and kinsmen was perpetrated.

Sallust touches in passing upon this great crime. First, he commemorates and briefly praises those more ancient times when men lived out their lives without covetousness and each man was well enough pleased with what was his. He then says: 'But afterwards, when Cyrus in Asia, and the Spartans and Athenians in Greece, began to subdue cities and nations and to deem lust for mastery a sufficient reason for war, and to hold that the greatest glory belongs to the greatest empire' – and so on with the rest of what he had resolved to say.³² For my purpose, it is enough to quote only these words. This 'lust for mastery' disturbs and consumes the human race with great ills. Rome was conquered by this lust when she triumphed over Alba; and, in praising her own crime, she called it glory. For, as our Scriptures say, 'the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth'.³³

Away, then, with concealments and deceitful whitewashings! Let these things be examined openly. Let no one tell me that this man or that man was great because he fought with some man or another and conquered him. Gladiators also fight, and they also conquer. This cruelty, too, has its reward of praise (although it would, I think, be better to pay the penalty for any amount of slothfulness than to seek glory in such feats of arms). But if two gladiators were to enter the arena to fight, one a son and the other his father, who could endure such a spectacle? Who would not shun it? How, then, could the clash of arms between two cities be glorious when one of the cities was a mother and the other her daughter? Did it make a difference that there was no arena, and that broader battlefields

³¹ *Aen.*, 6, 814ff.

³² *Catil.*, 2, 2.

³³ Psalm 10, 23.

were filled with the bodies, not of two gladiators, but of multitudes belonging to two peoples? Did it matter that those struggles were encircled, not by an amphitheatre, but by the whole world? Did it matter that they furnished an ungodly spectacle both to those then alive and, for as long as their fame is handed down, to their posterity also?

The gods who presided over the Roman empire were like theatrical spectators at these struggles. They remained quite unmoved when the sister of the Horatii was added by her own brother's sword to the two brothers slain. They were not moved when she became a third victim on the other side: a victim to match the three slain Curiatii, so that Rome, even though she was the conqueror, might sustain no fewer deaths than the conquered.

Then, as the fruit of victory, Alba was destroyed. After Ilium had been destroyed by the Greeks, and when they had left Lavinium, where Aeneas had established a vagrant and fleeting kingdom, the Trojan divinities occupied Alba as their third dwelling-place. But Alba itself was then overthrown: because, perhaps, in their customary fashion, the gods now departed from it also. Clearly, 'All the gods upon whom this realm stood have gone, forsaking shrine and altar.' They departed indeed, and from a third dwelling-place, so that Rome, you see, might be thought all the more provident in becoming their fourth. For whereas Alba, where Amulius had expelled his brother, displeased them, Rome, where Romulus slew his brother in order to reign, pleased them!

But, our adversaries say, before Alba was destroyed, its people were transferred to Rome, so that one city might be made out of both. So be it, then: this was done. But that city, Ascanius's kingdom and the third home of the Trojan gods, a mother city, was still destroyed by her own daughter! Moreover, before the survivors of the war could form one miserable lump out of the two peoples, much blood was shed on both sides.

But why should I tell, one instance at a time, of the frequent renewal of these same wars under the other kings? They seemed to end in victory, yet they culminated time and time again in great slaughters. And, time and time again, after treaties of peace had been concluded between fathers-in-law and sons-in-law and their stock and posterity, the wars were renewed once more. No small indication of this calamitous state of affairs is to be found in the

fact that none of these kings closed the gates of war.³⁴ None of them, then, reigned in peace, even though protected by so many gods.

15 How the Roman kings lived and died

How, moreover, did the kings themselves meet their ends? A flattering fable says of Romulus that he was caught up and received into heaven. Some Roman authors, however, say that he was hacked to pieces by the Senate for his ferocity.³⁵ The story is that a certain Julius Proculus was suborned to say that Romulus had appeared to him and, through him, commanded the Roman people to worship him as one of the divine beings. In this way, it is said, the people, who had begun to swell with anger against the Senate, were suppressed and calmed. For an eclipse of the sun had also occurred, and the ignorant multitude, not knowing that this happens according to the determinate laws of the sun's own movement, attributed it to the merits of Romulus. But this withdrawal of the sun's light – this indication of the sun's grief – should surely rather have been interpreted as a sign that Romulus had been murdered! Indeed, a similar sign appeared when the Lord was crucified by the cruel and impious Jews.³⁶ But that this latter concealment of the sun did not come about through the natural movement of the heavenly bodies is sufficiently shown by the fact that it took place during the Pass-over of the Jews. For this festival is held at full moon, whereas eclipses of the sun normally happen only at the last quarter of the moon.

Cicero also shows plainly enough that Romulus's reception into the company of the gods was more believed in than real. Even while praising him in his book *De republica*, he says, in the person of Scipio, 'So great were his attainments that, when he suddenly disappeared during an eclipse of the sun, he was believed to have been translated into the number of the gods; and this opinion could not have been held of any mortal without the highest reputation for virtue.'³⁷ By the words 'suddenly disappeared' we are here surely to

³⁴ Cf. Ch. 9.

³⁵ Livy, 1,16; Florus, *Epitome*, 1,1,17f; Cicero, *De rep.*, 2,10,20.

³⁶ Luke 23,44f.

³⁷ *De rep.*, 2,10,17.

understand that he was removed either by the violence of a storm or by vile murder. For others of their writers mention a sudden storm in addition to the eclipse of the sun: a storm which certainly either furnished an occasion for the crime or itself swallowed Romulus up.

Again, speaking of Tullus Hostilius, who was the third king of Rome and who was himself destroyed by lightning, Cicero says in the same book that he was not believed to have been received among the gods even though he died as he did.³⁸ Perhaps, Cicero suggests, this was because the Romans did not wish to have what they agreed or believed in the case of Romulus to be made vulgar or commonplace, as it would have been if it had been readily attributed to another also. Again, in one of his invectives Cicero says clearly, 'Romulus, who founded this city, we have raised up to the immortal gods by our goodwill and renown.'³⁹ This suggests that Romulus's elevation did not truly occur, but was a polite fiction devised and published in recognition of his virtues. In the dialogue *Hortensius*, moreover, while speaking of regular eclipses of the sun, Cicero says that they 'produce the same darkness that was produced at the time of Romulus's death, which occurred when the sun was hidden'.⁴⁰ Here, certainly, he does not in the least shrink from speaking of the man's 'death', for he is engaged in discussion rather than praise.

With the exceptions of Numa Pompilius and Ancus Martius, both of whom died of natural causes, the other kings of the Roman people also met dreadful ends. Tullus Hostilius, the conqueror and destroyer of Alba, was, as I have said, consumed by lightning, along with his whole household. Tarquinius Priscus was slain by the sons of his predecessor.⁴¹ And Servius Tullus was slain by the vile wickedness of his son-in-law Tarquinius Superbus, who succeeded him in the kingdom. Even when such parricide was perpetrated against Rome's best king, however, the gods did not forsake the shrines and altars of Rome. It is said that they were driven to do this in the case of unhappy Troy, whom they abandoned to destruction and

³⁸ *De rep.*, 2,17; cf. Livy 1,22ff.

³⁹ *In Catil.*, 31,1.

⁴⁰ Only fragments of this dialogue survive (ed. A. Grilli, Milan, 1962). It was an exhortation to the study of philosophy. Augustine refers to it frequently, and tells us that reading it played a large part in his conversion to Christianity (*Confess.*, 3,4,7).

⁴¹ Livy, 1,40.

fire, by the mere adultery of Paris. Yet, in Rome's case, that very Tarquin who had murdered his father-in-law then succeeded him, and the gods certainly did not abandon this wicked parricide who reigned only because he had murdered his father-in-law. Indeed, he triumphed in many glorious wars and built the Capitol from the spoils.⁴² The gods did not depart from him, then. Rather, remaining where they were, they were content that Jupiter, their own king, should preside and rule in the loftiest temple which the parricide had built. For Tarquinius did not build the Capitol while he was still innocent and then suffer expulsion from the city subsequently, for later wrongdoings. On the contrary, that very kingdom in the midst of which he built the Capitol came to him only through the commission of a most abominable crime. And when the Romans did eventually drive him out of the kingdom and expel him from within the city's walls, this was for the crime against Lucretia which was not his own but the offence of his son. Indeed, it was committed not only without his father's knowledge, but even in his absence. Tarquinius was then laying siege to the city of Ardea, waging war on behalf of the Roman people; and we do not know what he would have done if the evil deed of his son had been brought to his notice. Nonetheless, without seeking or ascertaining his judgment in the matter, the people deprived him of his authority. They closed their gates against him as soon as the army, which had been ordered to desert him, had been admitted; and, when he returned, they refused to grant him entry. Then, having exhausted the Roman people by the most disastrous wars, during which he appealed to their neighbours against them, he lived quietly as a private citizen in the town of Tusculum, near Rome, for fourteen years, accompanied only by his wife. It is said that he failed to recover his kingdom because he had been abandoned by those whom he had trusted to help him. Such an end was, no doubt, preferable to that of his father-in-law, slain by his son-in-law with, it is said, the connivance of his own daughter. But this Tarquin the Romans called not the Cruel, not the Infamous, but the Proud: perhaps because, in their own pride, they could not bear the pride of another. Yet so lightly did they regard his crime in murdering the best of their kings, his own father-in-law, that they made him their king! I wonder, indeed, if

⁴² Cf. Cicero, *De rep.*, 2,24,44; Livy, 1,55.

it was not a greater crime on their part to confer so great a reward on so great a crime.

Yet still the gods did not forsake the shrines and altars of Rome; although perhaps someone will say, in defence of those gods, that they remained at Rome rather to inflict punishments on the Romans than to confer benefits: to punish them by seducing them with empty victories and consuming them with such dire wars.

This, then, was the life of the Romans under the kings during that vaunted age of the commonwealth which ended with the expulsion of Tarquinius Superbus: a period of some 243 years. During this time, all those victories, purchased with so much bloodshed and such calamities, extended Rome's dominion scarcely twenty miles from the city. So small a territory is now hardly to be compared even with that of any Gaetolian city.

16 Of the first Roman consuls, one of whom expelled
the other, and soon afterwards perished by a wound
inflicted by a wounded enemy, after the most
atrocious parricide

To that age let us add also the time during which, as Sallust says,⁴³ equitable and just laws were still being enacted: the period, that is, which lasted until fear of Tarquin had abated and the grievous war with Etruria was over. For, as long as the Etruscans gave assistance to Tarquin in his endeavours to regain the kingdom, Rome was smitten by grievous warfare. Equitable and just laws therefore prevailed, Sallust says, not because the commonwealth was devoted to justice, but only because she was hard pressed by her enemies.

In this briefest of periods, how disastrous a year was that in which the first consuls were created after the expulsion of the kings! Indeed, they did not complete their year. First, Junius Brutus ejected his colleague Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus from the city in disgrace. Shortly afterwards, he himself fell in battle, he and his foe mutually wounded. But he had first slain his own sons and the brothers of his wife because he had discovered that they were conspiring to restore Tarquin. This deed Virgil subsequently records with praise; yet he immediately shudders at it in his clemency. He

⁴³ *Hist. frag.*, 1, 11.

says first, 'When their father found his children fomenting new wars, he punished them himself, for the sake of fair liberty.' But then, shortly afterwards, he exclaims, 'But what an unhappy man this is, no matter how much his deed may be celebrated in days to come!' In other words: however greatly posterity may praise and extol the man who slew his own sons, he is, Virgil says, still unhappy. Then, as if to console this unhappy man, he adds: 'But love of country drove him, and the immense love of praise.'⁴⁴

This Brutus, therefore, slew his own sons and the son of Tarquin also, his enemy. He could not, however, survive his exchange of blows with the latter. Indeed, he was outlived by Tarquin himself. In this fate of Brutus, then, is not the innocence of his colleague Collatinus seen to be vindicated: that Collatinus who, though a good citizen, suffered, after Tarquin had been banished, the same punishment as the tyrant Tarquin himself? For Brutus himself is said to have been of the blood of Tarquin also. What brought about the downfall of Collatinus, however, was the similarity of his name to that of the king; for Collatinus was also called Tarquinius. He should, therefore, have been required to change his name, not his fatherland. After all, the word could have been removed from his name: he could have been called simply L. Collatinus. Why, therefore, did he not lose what he might have lost with no detriment? The only effect of his keeping his name was that he was ordered to be deprived of his office, even though he was one of the first consuls, and of his citizenship even though he was a good citizen. Does this, then, redound to the glory of Junius Brutus – this iniquity, both detestable in itself and of no profit to the commonwealth? Did he perpetrate this crime because driven by love of country and the immense love of praise? When the tyrant Tarquin had been expelled, L. Tarquinius Collatinus, the husband of Lucretia, was created consul jointly with Brutus. How just the people were in paying heed to the morals of a citizen rather than his name! By contrast, how impious Brutus was in depriving of his fatherland and honour his first colleague in that new office, when he might have deprived him of his name only, if that name gave scandal! And these wicked deeds were done, these evils occurred, when equitable and just laws prevailed in that commonwealth!

⁴⁴ *Aen.*, 6,820ff.

Lucretius also, who was chosen to replace Brutus, was removed by sickness before the year was ended. Thus, Publius Valerius, who succeeded Collatinus, and Marcus Horatius, who was chosen in place of the deceased Lucretius, completed that deathly and infernal year which had five consuls: the year in which the Roman commonwealth inaugurated the new honour and office of the consulate.

17 Of the ills by which the Roman commonwealth
was vexed after the inauguration of the consulate,
while no help was offered by the gods whom the
Romans worshipped

Then, as fears gradually diminished – not because the wars ceased, but because they ceased to be so grievous a burden – the time when equitable and just laws prevailed came to an end. It was followed by the state of affairs which Sallust briefly depicts:

Thereafter, the patricians treated the common people as their slaves, and dealt with their lives and bodies after the fashion of the kings, driving them from their fields, and lording it over those who were destitute of land. The common people, oppressed by these cruelties, and especially by high rates of interest, and at the same time bearing the burden of taxation and military service in the ceaseless wars, withdrew under arms to the Sacred Hill and the Aventine, and so presently secured for themselves the Tribunes of the People and other rights. But the end of discord and strife on both sides was brought about only by the second Punic War.⁴⁵

But why should I now spend time in writing of such things, or make others spend it in reading them? Sallust has succinctly explained how wretched the Roman commonwealth was during all the long years down to the second Punic War, when foreign wars and internal discords and seditions never ceased to distract it. The victories in which it rejoiced, therefore, were not the solid joys of the fortunate, but the vain comforts of miserable men. They were no more than beguiling temptations to seek only one barren evil after another. And let not good and prudent Romans be angered

⁴⁵ *Hist. frag.*, 1,11; cf. Bk II,18.

because we say this. Indeed, we need not ask this or make such an appeal to them, for it is quite certain that they will not bear us any ill will. After all, we speak no more severely, and mention no fault more grave, than their own authors do (although we are certainly not their equal in style and facility), yet they take pains to learn these authors, and require their children to do the same. In any case, if any are angered, what would they do to me if I were to say what Sallust says?

Many riots, seditions and, at last, civil wars, broke out, while a few powerful men, to whom most of the citizens gave their esteem, assumed supreme power under the seemingly guise of seeking the good of the civic fathers or people. Citizens were indeed called good and bad without reference to their service to the commonwealth, for all were equally corrupt. But he who had the most wealth and power to do harm was deemed good because he defended the prevailing state of affairs.⁴⁶

The writers of Rome's history, therefore, judged that an honourable freedom of speech required them not to pass over in silence the ills of the city whose praises they had in so many other places been compelled to proclaim. (After all, they had no other and truer City: that City whose citizens are to be chosen for eternity.) Why, then, should we do otherwise? When men impute the evils of this present time to our Christ, the infirm and weak-minded are thereby estranged from that City in which alone an eternal and blessed life is to be achieved. Our freedom of speech therefore ought to be all the greater, since our hope in God is better and more certain. In fact, however, we say nothing more dreadful against the gods of the Romans than their own authors – the authors whom they read and commend – say again and again. Indeed, all that we have said we have derived from them; although we are by no means able to speak as well they do or say as much as they say.

Where were the gods, then, when the Romans, whom they had induced to worship them by lying trickery, were vexed by such great calamities? Where were those gods, whom the Romans deemed worthy of worship for the sake of the slender and false happiness of this world? Where were they when the consul Valerius was slain while defending the Capitol after it had been set ablaze

⁴⁶ *Hist. frag.*, 1, 12.

by exiles and slaves?⁴⁷ Indeed, Valerius himself was able to bring more aid to that swarm of gods than ever he received from them; for it was he who saved the temple of Jupiter, their greatest and best king! Where were they when the city, worn out by the ceaseless evils of sedition, was devastated by a grievous famine and plague during that brief interval of peace while she awaited the return of the emissaries who had been sent to borrow laws from Athens?⁴⁸ Where were they when the people, again suffering from famine, created for the first time a Prefect of the Market? As the famine took hold, Spurius Maelius distributed grain to the hungry multitude; but he thereby incurred the charge of plotting to become king. At the instance of this same prefect, and by the dictate of the aged and infirm dictator Lucius Quintus, he was slain by Quintus Servilius, master of the horse: an act which occasioned a great and most perilous tumult in the city.⁴⁹ Where were they when, a great pestilence having arisen, the people, in their long and great exhaustion, resolved to celebrate *Lectisternia* for their useless gods: a festival which had never been celebrated before?⁵⁰ Couches [*lecti*] were set out [*sternebantur*] in honour of the gods, and from these this sacred – or, rather, blasphemous – festival received its name. Where were they when, by fighting ill, the Roman army sustained frequent and great disasters at the hands of the Veians for ten consecutive years until Furius Camillus at last came to its aid, whom the ungrateful city then condemned?⁵¹ Where were they when the Gauls came and despoiled and burnt Rome and filled her with carnage?⁵² Where were they when there occurred that memorable pestilence, which wrought such monstrous slaughter, in which perished that Furius Camillus who first defended the ungrateful commonwealth from the Veians and then delivered it from the Gauls?⁵³ This was the pestilence during which the Romans introduced theatrical performances: another new pestilence, not of their bodies, but, far more pernicious, of their morals. Where were they when yet another grave pestilence arose, believed to have sprung from poison admin-

⁴⁷ Livy, 3, 18.

⁴⁸ Cf. Bk II, 16.

⁴⁹ Livy, 4, 12f.

⁵⁰ Livy, 5, 13.

⁵¹ Livy, 5, 32; cf. Bk II, 17.

⁵² Livy, 5, 37ff.

⁵³ Livy, 7, 1.

istered by the women who, in such numbers and of such noble rank that it passes belief, were thereby detected in a crime worse than any pestilence?⁵⁴ Or when, at the Caudine Forks, both consuls, at the head of the army, were so overwhelmed by the Samnites that they were compelled to make a humiliating treaty with them, with six hundred Roman knights handed over as hostages? It was on this occasion that the rest of the army, having laid down their arms and been stripped of all else, were forced to pass beneath the yoke wearing only a single item of clothing.⁵⁵ Or when, during a grave pestilence affecting what was left of the army, many of the soldiers also perished by a bolt of lightning?⁵⁶ Or when, during yet another unbearable pestilence, Rome was compelled to send to Epidaurus and bring back Aesculapius as a physician-god?⁵⁷ (No doubt the many adulteries committed in his younger days by Jupiter, the king of all, now long seated in the Capitol, had left him no time to study medicine.) Or when the hostile Lucanians, Brathians, Samnites, Etruscans and Senonian¹ Gauls all conspired together at the same time so that, first, Rome's ambassadors were slain by them, and then an army under a praetor was destroyed? On this second occasion, seven tribunes and thirteen thousand soldiers perished, as did the praetor himself.⁵⁸ Or when, after protracted and grievous seditions at Rome, the common people plundered the city like an enemy and withdrew to the Janiculum?⁵⁹ This was so dire a calamity that Hortensius was made dictator: a step usually taken only in times of extreme peril. But, having recalled the people to their senses, he then died while still in office: a thing which had never before happened to any dictator. This, surely, was a grave reproach to those gods who now had Aesculapius among their number!

At that time, indeed, when wars were everywhere so frequent, soldiers grew so scarce that Rome was forced to conscript into military service the common people [*proletaris*], so called because, being too poor to equip themselves for military service, they had leisure to beget offspring [*proles*].⁶⁰ Also, Pyrrhus, king of Greece, and at

⁵⁴ Livy, 8,18.

⁵⁵ Livy, 9,3ff.

⁵⁶ Livy, 10,31.

⁵⁷ Livy, 10,47; cf. Ch. 12.

⁵⁸ Livy, 12.

⁵⁹ Livy, 11.

⁶⁰ For this etymology, see Cicero, *De rep.*, 2,22,40.

that time a figure of enormous renown, was invited by the Tarentines to become an enemy of the Roman people. It was to him, indeed, when he sought to know the future course of events, that Apollo uttered an oracle so elegantly ambiguous that, whichever of the two possibilities came to pass, the god himself would seem to be prophetic. For he said: 'I tell you, O Pyrrhus, that you the Romans have power to conquer';⁶¹ and so, whether Pyrrhus was to be conquered by the Romans or the Romans by Pyrrhus, the foreteller might safely await either outcome. But what appalling slaughter then befell both armies! From this conflict, however, Pyrrhus emerged victorious, and so might have declared that, to his mind, Apollo was indeed prophetic – had not the Romans themselves then emerged victorious from the next encounter.

In the midst of this dreadful war, there again broke out a grievous pestilence among the women; for pregnant women died before they were delivered. At this point, I expect, Aesculapius excused himself on the ground that his profession was chief physician, not midwife. Cattle, also, perished in the same way: so much so that it was believed that the whole race of animals was about to become extinct. And what of that memorable winter, so unbelievable in its severity, when, for forty days, the snow lay horrifyingly deep even in the forum, and the Tiber itself was frozen solid? If all this had happened in our own time, would not our adversaries have had a great deal to say?

And what of that other great pestilence which raged so long and carried off so many? Despite the presence of Aesculapius, it grew much worse as it extended into its second year, and recourse was therefore had to the Sibylline books. In this kind of oracle, as Cicero reminds us in his work called *De divinatione*, great faith is usually placed in interpreters, who make whatever conjectures they can or wish as to the meaning of obscure passages.⁶² On this occasion, the cause of the pestilence was said to be the fact that so many sacred shrines were now occupied for private purposes. For the time being, therefore, Aesculapius was freed from the grave accusations of ignorance or idleness. Why, however, had so many sacred shrines come to be thus occupied without anyone to forbid it? Was this not

⁶¹ Cicero, *De divin.*, 2,56,116.

⁶² *De divin.*, 2,54,10ff.

because supplication had been made to those swarms of divine beings for so long, and to so little effect, that their sacred places had gradually been forsaken by their worshippers, who assumed that they might at any rate be reclaimed to serve human purposes without offence to the gods? And although, in order to abate the pestilence, the shrines were at that time carefully identified and repaired, they nonetheless subsequently fell into disuse again, and were once more made to serve human purposes. Had this not happened, no one would cite, as proof of Varro's great learning, the fact that, in writing of the sacred shrines, he mentions so many that are otherwise unknown. Meanwhile, there was procured, not a defence against pestilence, but only a fine excuse for the gods.

18 How great were the disasters suffered by the Romans during the Punic Wars, which were not lessened by the protection sought from the gods

In the Punic Wars, victory long remained undecided and uncertain as between the two empires, and the two mighty peoples strove against one another to the utmost of their strength and resources. During these wars, how many smaller kingdoms were crushed, how many broad and noble towns destroyed, how many cities afflicted and lost! How many regions and lands far and wide were laid waste! How often were the victors on either side vanquished! How many men were consumed, whether soldiers in battle or peoples taking no part in the struggle! What numbers of ships, too, were destroyed in naval encounters or sunk by tempests of every degree of severity! If I were to endeavour to describe or enumerate all these things, I should be no more than a writer of history.

During this time, perturbed as she was by great fear, the city of Rome resorted to vain and laughable remedies. By the authority of the Sibylline books, the Secular Games were restored. The celebration of these games had been instituted a century before, but they had faded from memory in happier times. The games consecrated to the gods of the underworld, which had also fallen into disuse in the better years of the past, were also renewed by the pontiffs. And, when they were renewed, all the infernal gods no doubt took delight in the sport furnished by the great quantities of

dying men. Indeed, the ferocious wars themselves, and the bloody animosities, and the great victories first on one side and then on the other: all these things, though most lamentable to men, provided amusement for the demons and rich feasts for the gods of the underworld.

But nothing more lamentable took place during the first Punic War than that Roman defeat which led to the capture of the Regulus whom I mentioned in the first and second books. Here was an entirely great man: a man who had already conquered and subdued the Carthaginians. He would undoubtedly have brought that same first Punic War to an end, had not his great avidity for praise and glory induced him to impose upon the weary Carthaginians conditions harsher than they could bear. If this man's unexpected captivity and undeserved bondage, his fidelity to his oath and his most cruel death, do not make the gods blush, then it must be true that they are made out of air and do not have blood.

Nor, at that time, was there any shortage of awful calamities within the very walls of Rome. For when the Tiber overflowed its usual levels and inundated almost all the more low-lying parts of the city, some buildings were carried away by the violence of the torrent and others, waterlogged by the protracted flood, collapsed. This misfortune was followed by an even more destructive fire which, having consumed certain loftier buildings around the forum, did not spare even its own proper temple of Vesta: that temple where the Virgins, whose task was more a punishment than an honour, conferred eternal life upon fire, as it were, by ceaselessly feeding it with wood. Then, indeed, the fire which was worshipped in that place was not only living but raging! When the virgins, terrified by its ferocity, were unable to save from the blaze that fatal idol which had already brought destruction upon the other three cities in which it had dwelt, the pontiff Metellus, heedless of his own safety, dashed in and rescued it.⁶³ He was himself half burnt in doing so, however. The fire did not recognise him, and, if there ever had been any divine being inside the building, it had by now fled. A man, therefore, could be of greater service to the holy things of Vesta than they could be to the man! If the gods could not repulse the flames from themselves, then, what aid could they bring

⁶³ Ovid, *Fast.*, 6,437ff; Livy, 19.

to the city whose safety they were supposed to protect against flood and fire? Just so: the facts themselves show that they had no power at all.

These objections of ours would be to no purpose if our adversaries replied that their sacred images were set up not to secure temporal goods, but as symbols of the eternal. In that case, they could say that even though corporeal and visible things had happened to perish, no harm had been done to those things for the sake of which they had been set up, and that fresh provision could be made for the same purpose. In fact, however, so wonderful is their blindness, they suppose that a city's earthly safety and temporal felicity can be kept from perishing by sacred objects which can perish themselves! And so, when it is shown that they suffered the erosion of their safety or the invasion of ill fortune even while these sacred objects endured, they can only blush at an opinion that they are unwilling to change yet unable to defend.

19 Of the affliction of the second Punic War, by which the strength of both sides was consumed

As to the second Punic War, it would be too great a task to enumerate all the calamities suffered by the two peoples during their long and wide-ranging struggle with one another. These calamities were so great that 'the victor was more like the vanquished';⁶⁴ and even those who wish rather to praise Rome's empire than recount Rome's wars confess this.

Hannibal poured out of Spain, crossed the Pyrenees mountains, traversed Gaul, burst across the Alps and, during his long circuit, augmented his resources by plundering or subduing everything in sight. He swept like a torrent through the alpine passes and into Italy. What bloody battles were then fought, and how often were the Romans overcome! How many towns deserted to the enemy; how many were captured and subjugated! How dire were the conflicts which so often brought defeat to Rome and glory to Hannibal! And what shall I say of the awful disaster of Cannae, where Hannibal, cruellest of men though he was, nonetheless had his fill of butchering his bitterest enemies and, it is reported, gave orders that

⁶⁴ Florus, *Epitome*, 2,6; cf. Livy, 21,1.

they were to be spared? From that field, he sent to Carthage three basketloads of gold rings. He did this in order to indicate that so many of Rome's finest had fallen in the battle that it was easier to grasp it by measure than by number, and that the slaughter of the rank and file, who lay there without rings, numerous in proportion to their lowliness of birth, could only be guessed at, and not accurately reported.⁶⁵

So great, indeed, was the shortage of soldiers after Cannae that the Romans, by promising immunity from punishment, collected together criminals, and also gave freedom to their slaves, and by these discreditable means did not so much recruit an army as create one. But these slaves – or, rather, so as not to do them injustice, these freemen – lacked arms with which to fight for the Roman commonwealth. Arms were therefore taken from the temples, as if the Romans should say to their gods, 'Lay down what you have for so long held to no avail, so that perhaps our slaves may make some use of what you, our gods, have been unable to wield.' Also, the public treasury at that time lacked funds sufficient to pay the soldiers' wages. Private property was therefore sold for public use, with each man contributing what he had until even the senators left themselves no gold beyond one ring and one seal, the miserable insignia of their rank. The members of the other orders and tribes were, of course, left with still less. But if in our own time men were to be reduced to such poverty, who would be able to bear their complaints? We find it hard enough to bear them now, when more is spent on actors for the sake of unnecessary pleasure than was collected then for the legions who were fighting for their lives!

20 Of the destruction of the Saguntīnēs, who
perished because of their friendship for Rome, yet
received no help from the Roman gods

Of all the evils which arose from the second Punic War, however, none was more miserable or more worthy of piteous lamentation than the destruction of the Saguntines.⁶⁶ The Spanish city of

⁶⁵ Livy, 23,22.

⁶⁶ Livy, 21,2ff.

Saguntum was, indeed, a most loyal friend to the Roman people, and was destroyed for keeping faith with them. For when Hannibal broke his treaty with the Romans, he sought occasion for provoking Rome into war. Accordingly, he made a ferocious assault upon Saguntum, and, when news of this was heard at Rome, legates were sent to Hannibal to call upon him to lift the siege. Disregarded by Hannibal, they proceeded to Carthage, lodged a protest there against the breach of the treaty, and then, having failed in their negotiations, returned to Rome. In all this delay, that wretched yet most opulent city, precious both to itself and the commonwealth of Rome, was destroyed by the Carthaginians after eight or nine months. It is horrible to read of this destruction and still more so to write of it. I shall, however, briefly recall it, because it is greatly pertinent to the matter before us.

In the first place, famine gradually consumed the Saguntines, and it is said that they even fed on the dead bodies of their fellow citizens. Then, exhausted by the whole affair, they publicly constructed an enormous funeral pyre and, having first slain their families with the sword, cast themselves into the flames, so that they might at least escape falling into the hands of Hannibal as prisoners. Here, at any rate, the gods should have done something: those gluttons and wastrels who long for the fat of sacrifices and who deceive with obscure and lying divinations. Here, surely, they should have done something. They should have aided a city so closely allied to the Roman people. They should not have allowed it to perish for keeping faith with them. They had, indeed, presided over the signing of the treaty of alliance between Saguntum and the Roman commonwealth. Yet the Saguntines, faithfully preserving the alliance which they had entered into under the auspices of the gods, and to which they had pledged their fidelity and bound themselves by oath, were then besieged, defeated and destroyed by a perfidious man. If it really was the gods who, later, when Hannibal was at the very walls of Rome, terrified him with storm and lightning and drove him far back, they certainly should have done the same on the earlier occasion. Indeed, it would, I venture to observe, have redounded more to their honour had they been able to produce a raging storm on behalf of the friends of the Romans, who were in peril for not breaking faith with the Romans and who at that time

had no succour, rather than on behalf of the Romans themselves, who were fighting on their own behalf and who were well provided with resources against Hannibal.

If, therefore, the gods really were the protectors of Roman felicity and glory, they should have averted the deep guilt of the Saguntine calamity. As it is, however, it would surely be foolish to believe it was because those gods defended her that Rome did not perish at the hands of a victorious Hannibal; for they were not able to save the city of Saguntum from perishing because of its friendship for Rome. If the people of Saguntum had been Christians and had suffered something of this kind for their faith in the Gospel – although they would in that case not have destroyed themselves with the sword or fire: if they had suffered destruction for their faith in the Gospel, they would then have suffered in hope. They would have suffered in that hope through which they also believed in Christ: a hope not of a fleeting temporal reward, but of an endless eternity. But as to those gods who are deemed worthy of worship for only one purpose, and whose worship is required only for that purpose – namely, to secure those things which bring only a worthless and transient felicity: what will those who seek to defend and excuse them say to us about the destruction of the Saguntines? They will, presumably, only say again what they said concerning the destruction of Regulus. There is, indeed, a difference between the two cases, in that the one concerns a single man and the other a whole city. In each case, however, the cause of destruction was the keeping of faith. For it was for this reason that Regulus returned to his enemies and that the Saguntines refused to go over to theirs.

Does the keeping of faith provoke the anger of the gods, then? Or can it be that not only individual men, but even entire cities, can perish even though the gods are propitious to them? Let our adversaries choose whichever answer they wish. For if the gods are angered by the keeping of faith, let them seek faithless men by whom to be worshipped. But if men and cities can perish from the affliction of many and grievous torments even when the gods are well disposed to them, then their worship does not produce felicity as its fruit. Let those, therefore, who attribute their misfortunes to the fact that the sacred rites of the gods have ceased desist from anger. For it may be that, even if the gods had not only remained with them, but also regarded them with favour, they might still be,

not, as now, merely complaining of their miserable lot, but, like Regulus and the Saguntines in the past, perishing in dreadful torment!

21 Of the ingratitude of the city of Rome to her deliverer Scipio, and of her morals during the period which Sallust describes as the best

Having regard to the limits of the work which I have here undertaken, I leave many things aside and come now to the period between the second and last Carthaginian war. It was during this time that, as Sallust says, the Romans lived by the highest morals and in the greatest concord. It was, then, during this time of sublime morality and supreme concord that the accusation of Scipio occurred! It was Scipio who had delivered Rome and Italy, and who had with marvellous distinction brought to a close the second Punic War, at once so horrible, so destructive and so perilous. He was the conqueror of Hannibal and the captor of Carthage; and his life from youth upwards is described as having been devoted to the gods and nourished in their temples.⁶⁷ Yet, after his extraordinary triumph, he yielded to the accusations of his enemies and, bereft of the country which by his valour he had rendered safe and free, lived out the remainder of his life as an exile in the town of Linternum. So little did he desire to return to Rome, indeed, that he is said to have left instructions that not even after death was he to be buried in his ungrateful fatherland.⁶⁸

It was shortly after this that oriental luxury – worse than any enemy – crept into Rome for the first time. This occurred through the agency of the proconsul Gnaeus Manlius, who triumphed over the Galatians. It was then that, for the first time, beds of bronze with precious hangings are said to have made their appearance.⁶⁹ It was then also that female musicians were introduced into banquets, along with other licentious items of wickedness. It is, however, my intention now to speak, not of the things which men do of their own free will, but of those evils which they suffer in spite of

⁶⁷ Cf. Aulus Gellius, *Noct. Att.*, 7,1

⁶⁸ Livy, 38,50ff.

⁶⁹ Livy, 39,9.

themselves. I have, therefore, recalled the case of Scipio, who yielded to his enemies and died exiled from the fatherland that he had liberated, as being peculiarly pertinent to our present discussion. For those Roman divinities from whose temples he had driven Hannibal gave him no commensurate reward: yet these divinities are worshipped only for the sake of present happiness! But because Sallust says that Roman morals were then at their highest, I deemed it as well to mention this oriental luxury also, so that it might be understood that what Sallust says is true only when that time is compared with others, during which morals were still worse because discord was more grievous.

Again, it was then – that is, between the second and last Carthaginian wars – that the Voconian Law was passed, which forbade anyone to make a woman, not even an only daughter, his heir. I do not know of any law that could be said or thought to be more unjust. It is, however, true that the misfortunes which occurred during that interval between the two Punic Wars were more tolerable than those which befell at other times. For the army was then employed only in foreign wars, and was consoled with victory. At home, also, there were no such furious discords as at other times. But Rome's rival for empire was utterly destroyed in the final Punic War by a single assault launched by another Scipio, who thereby earned for himself the surname of Africanus. From that point onwards, the Roman commonwealth was so overwhelmed by a host of evils arising from the prosperity and security of her affairs that the sudden overthrow of Carthage is seen to have harmed Rome more than did its prolonged enmity.

We come next to the period down to the time of Augustus Caesar. Augustus seems in every way to have wrested their liberty from the Romans; but that liberty was in any case no longer glorious even in their own judgment, but full of contention and danger, and now deeply weakened and depleted. He once more submitted all things to the will of a monarch, and, in doing so, seemed to restore the commonwealth to health in its feeble old age. In the whole of the period down to his time, however, military disasters were sustained again and again for one reason or another. But I omit these. I also omit the treaty of Numantia, marred by such terrible disgrace. The Romans attribute this disgrace to the fact that the sacred chick-

ens flew the coop: a fact which, they say, augured ill to the consul Mancinus. But that little city had plagued Rome's besieging army for years, and had become a terror to the Roman commonwealth. It hardly seems likely, then, that any other commanders had marched against it with some more favourable augury.⁷⁰

22 Of the edict of Mithridates that all Roman citizens found in Asia should be slain

But, as I say, I omit these things. I certainly cannot pass over Mithridates, however: the king of Asia who commanded that all Roman citizens dwelling anywhere in Asia – where enormous numbers were pursuing their business – were to be put to death. And this was done, on a single day.⁷¹ What a pitiful thing it was to behold when suddenly, wherever each man was found – in the field, in the street, in the town, at home, in a village, in the market place, in a temple, in bed, at a banquet – he was incontinently and godlessly slaughtered! What moans there were from the dying; what tears from those who watched – and perhaps even from those who did the deed! For how harsh a necessity it was that compelled the hosts of these Roman citizens not only to witness this wicked slaughter in their own houses, but even to participate in it themselves! How harsh a necessity it was that compelled them to change their countenance suddenly from the mild kindness of friendship and, in a time of peace, to take part in the business of war! All, I say, were wounded together: the smitten in body, and the smiters in soul.

Had all these murdered persons failed to heed auguries? When they set out from their homes on that journey from which they were never to return, did they have no household and public gods to consult? If not, then our adversaries have no reason to complain of our own times in this respect: for it seems that the Romans have long despised auguries as vain. If, however, they did consult their gods, then let our adversaries tell us what good such gods did them even when, at least by human laws, they were not forbidden.

⁷⁰ Livy, 55; Cicero, *De orat.*, 1,40,181.

⁷¹ Livy, 78; Appian, *De bell. Mith.*, 22.

23 Of the internal ills by which the Roman
commonwealth was afflicted after a portent in the
form of madness in all the beasts which serve
mankind

But now let us recall as briefly as we can those evils which were all the more miserable because internal. In other words, let us speak of those civil – or, rather, uncivil – discords which were no longer mere seditions, but actual urban warfare, in which so much blood was poured out. Factional strife raged not now by means of squabbles in the popular assemblies and the exchange of contending arguments, but through the open clash of steel and arms. How much Roman blood was shed, how much of Italy was destroyed and devastated, by the Social War, Servile War and Civil Wars!

Before Latium began the Social War against Rome, all the animals used in the service of mankind – dogs, horses, asses, oxen and all the other beasts under man's dominion – became suddenly savage and, forgetting their domesticated tameness, left their enclosures and wandered at large. They resisted the approach not only of strangers, but even of their own masters, and no one could venture to come close to them, to drive them, without injury or danger.⁷² If this was a sign – and even if it was not a sign – how great an evil must have been portended by what was so great an evil in itself! If such a thing had occurred in our own day, we should find our adversaries more rabid against us than their animals were against them!

24 Of the civil discord which the seditions of the
Gracchi excited

The Civil Wars began with the seditions excited by the agrarian legislation of the Gracchi. For they wished to divide among the people land which the nobles wrongfully possessed. To dare to attack so ancient a wrong, however, was a most perilous undertaking. Indeed, as the event proved, it was utterly ruinous. What destruction there was when the elder Gracchus was slain! And again when, not long afterwards, the other Gracchus, his brother, was

⁷² Juhus Obsequens, *Libet prodig.*, 114; Orosius, *Hist.*, 5, 18, 9.

slain also. For noble and base-born alike were put to death, and not by laws or properly ordained powers, but by the conflict of armed mobs.

After the death of the younger Gracchus the consul Lucius Opimius, who had taken up arms against him in the city, and, having defeated and killed him, together with his associates, had massacred large numbers of citizens, held an investigation. He now used the device of judicial inquiry to persecute those who were left, and he is reputed to have executed three thousand men. When what purported to be a judicial investigation produced so many condemnations, we can only guess at how many must have met their deaths during the armed riots themselves! The smiter of Gracchus sold his head to the consul, as had been agreed beforehand, for its weight in gold.⁷³ It was also in this massacre that Marcus Fulvius, a man of consular rank, was put to death with his children.

25 Of the temple of Concord established by decree of the Senate in the place where these seditions and massacres had taken place

It was truly a gracious decree of the Senate by which a temple of Concord was built on that very spot where the dreadful tumult had occurred and where so many citizens of all ranks had fallen.⁷⁴ This was done so that a testimony to the punishment of the Gracchi might strike the eye and stir the memory of all who addressed the assembly. But what else was it than a mockery of the gods to construct a temple to that goddess who, had she been in the city at all, would surely not have suffered herself to be torn by such great dissension? (Although it may be, of course, that Concord herself was to blame for this crime, because she had abandoned the minds of the citizens; in which case she deserved to be locked up in that temple as though it were a prison.)

Why, then, if they wanted the temple to be in harmony with recorded fact, did the Senate not erect there a temple to Discord instead? Can any reason be given why Concord should be regarded as a goddess and Discord not? Why should we not regard both as

⁷³ Plutarch, *C. Gracchus*, 17.

⁷⁴ Appian, *De bell. civ.*, 1,26.

goddesses, but the one as good and the other bad, according to the distinction of Labeo?⁷⁵ His reason for making this distinction seems to have been, quite simply, that he noticed in Rome one temple dedicated to Fever and another to Health. By the same token, therefore, a temple should have been established not only to Concord, but to Discord also.

It was, indeed, to their peril that the Romans chose to live under the anger of so wicked a goddess by omitting to build her a temple. They did not remember that the destruction of Troy had its origin in the resentment of Discord. For when she was not invited with the other gods to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, she created discord between the three goddesses by placing a golden apple before them. From this arose the quarrel of the deities, the victory of Venus, the abduction of Helen and the destruction of Troy. Perhaps, then, she was already indignant that, of all the gods, she had not been thought worthy of a temple in the city of Rome, and had therefore caused the city to be disturbed with such great tumults. How much more sorely provoked would she have been, then, when she saw erected, in the place where the slaughter had taken place – in the place, that is, of her own handiwork – a temple to her rival!

The learned and wise grumble at us when we laugh at such absurd things. Yet since they do, after all, worship both good and bad deities, they can hardly evade the question concerning Concord and Discord. Either the Romans have neglected the worship of these goddesses and preferred to them Fever and Bellona, to whom they long ago made shrines; or they have worshipped Concord and Discord also, but Concord abandoned them, while Discord cruelly led them even into civil wars.

26 Of the wars of various kinds which followed the construction of the temple of Concord

They supposed, however, that the temple of Concord, established within view of the orators in the assembly as a reminder of the death and punishment of the Gracchi, would present a conspicuous obstacle to sedition. Much good it did them, however, as is indicated by the worse events that followed. For, from that time forth,

⁷⁵ Cf. Bk II, 11.

the orators strove, not to shun the example of the Gracchi, but to go beyond what they had proposed. Cases in point are Lucius Saturninus, the tribune of the people, Gaius Servilius the praetor, and, not much later,⁷⁶ Marcus Drusus. All these fomented seditions which, first of all, occasioned bloodshed – most grievous even then – and, next, the Social War by which Italy was so bitterly afflicted and reduced to so astounding a state of devastation and destruction. Then came the Servile War and the Civil Wars.

What battles were fought during the Servile War! What blood was shed: and only so that almost all the peoples of Italy, upon whom Rome's dominion so largely depended for its strength, should be conquered like savage barbarians! The writers of history have hardly found a satisfactory explanation of how a conflict begun by so tiny a number – that is, by fewer than seventy gladiators – came to expand into the Servile War by the addition of so great a number of fierce and cruel men: men who then defeated many generals of the Roman people and laid waste cities and whole regions. Nor was this the only Servile War. For before this the province of Macedonia, and later also Sicily and the sea coast of Italy, were depopulated by bands of slaves. Also, whose eloquence can adequately describe either the horrors which the pirates first committed during their robberies, or the wars which they afterwards waged against Rome?

27 Of the Civil War of Marius and Sulla

The hands of Marius were stained with the blood of many citizens, whom he had slain because they belonged to the opposing faction. When he was overcome and fled from the city, the city had hardly recovered its breath when, to use Cicero's words, 'Cinna then made himself master in alliance with Marius. Then, indeed, the most illustrious men were slain, and the lights of the city extinguished. The cruelty of this victory was afterwards avenged by Sulla; but it is impossible to describe how many citizens were lost and how great a calamity had befallen the commonwealth.'⁷⁷ Moreover, the

⁷⁶ It seems right to follow Augustine's seventeenth-century editor Luis Vives here and read *et non multo post* for *et multo post*.

⁷⁷ *In Catil.*, 3,10.

vengeance of Sulla did more harm than if the crimes which it was intended to punish had been left unpunished. Of this vengeance, Lucan says: 'The remedy went beyond its proper measure, and too closely resembled the disease. The guilty perished; but those who survived were guilty also.'⁷⁸

In that war between Marius and Sulla, and not counting those who fell in battle outside the walls, within the city itself the streets, squares, markets, theatres and temples were so filled with the bodies of the dead that it was difficult to tell whether the victors had slain more men before the victory, in order to become victors, or after it, because they were victors. As soon as Marius triumphed and secured his own return from exile, then (leaving aside the various butcheries carried out indiscriminately on all sides) the head of the consul Octavius was exhibited on the speakers' platform in the forum; the Caesars were murdered in their own homes by Fimbria; the two Crassi, father and son, were put to death in one another's sight; Baebius and Numitorius perished when they were dragged with hooks and their entrails scattered; Catulus escaped the hands of his enemies by taking poison; and Merula, the flamen of Jupiter, cut his veins and so poured out a libation of his own blood to Jupiter. Moreover, every one of those whose salutation Marius refused to accept by offering his right hand was at once cut down before his very eyes.

28 Of the nature of Sulla's victory, which avenged the cruelty of Marius

Then followed the victory of Sulla; which was, no doubt, a vengeance for all this cruelty. Although the blood of so many citizens had been shed to secure this victory, however, hostility continued even when the war was over, and the ensuing peace was more bloody than ever. To the earlier, and still recent, slaughters of the elder Marius, the younger Marius and Carbo, who also belonged to the party which supported Marius, were added still more grievous ones. When Sulla approached, and they despaired not only of victory, but even of life itself, they filled the world with new massacres of their own. In addition to the slaughter spread far and wide on

⁷⁸ *Pharsal.*, 2, 142ff.

every hand, they laid siege even to the Senate, and its members were led forth from the Senate House itself, as from a prison, and put to the sword. Mucius Scaevola, the pontiff, was slain even though he clung to the very altar of the temple of Vesta, the most sacred of all shrines in the estimation of the Romans. With his blood he almost extinguished that fire which ever burned under the perpetual care of the Virgins. Sulla then entered the city victorious, and in the Villa Publica, not in combat but by command, laid low seven thousand men who had surrendered, and who were therefore certainly unarmed: and this when peace, not war, was raging!

In the city at large, also, each of Sulla's men smote whom he pleased. The deaths were so numerous that they could not be counted, until it was suggested to Sulla that a few ought to be allowed to live, so that there might be some people for the victors to rule over! The furious licence to slay now here, now there, indiscriminately, was then withdrawn. To the accompaniment of great rejoicing, there was produced a list containing the names of two thousand men of the highest ranks – that is, of the equestrian and senatorial orders – who were to be slain and proscribed. The number brought grief, but the limit brought consolation. Sorrow for the many who were to be slain was less conspicuous than the joy of the remainder who were set free from fear.

But even the remainder, unfeeling in their security as they were, were moved to bewail the plight of some of those condemned to die. For a certain man was torn to pieces by the hands of the executioners, without swords. Men tore a living man apart more savagely than the beasts are wont to rend an abandoned carcase! Another man had his eyes dug out and his limbs cut off piece by piece, and so was forced to live a long while – or, rather, to die a long while – in the midst of such tortures. Certain noble cities were sold by public auction as though they were private estates, and one was condemned to be totally destroyed, like a single criminal sentenced to death.

These things were done in time of peace, when war was ended! They were done not so that victory might be obtained more speedily, but so that, having been obtained, it might not be regarded lightly. Peace vied with war in cruelty, and conquered. For the war brought armed men low, but the peace destroyed unarmed ones. During the war, he who was struck might at least strike back if he

could; but the object of the peace was to ensure not that those who had survived the war might live, but that they should die without being able to resist.

29 A comparison of the Gothic invasion with the disasters which Rome sustained at the hands of the Gauls or the authors of the Civil Wars

What rage displayed by foreign nations, what ferocity of the barbarians, can match the horror of this victory of citizens over citizens? Which of the attacks that Rome witnessed was more destructive, more foul, more bitter: the Gallic invasion of long ago and the more recent invasion of the Goths, or the ferocity of Marius and Sulla and of the other men of great renown who supported them? It is as if the Romans' eyes were to attack their own limbs. The Gauls indeed massacred whatever senators they could find in the city outside the stronghold of the Capitol, which was the only place successfully defended. But at least they sold life in exchange for gold to those who were already entrenched on that hill. After all, they could equally well have devoured that life by means of a siege, even though they were not able to destroy it with the sword. The Goths, by contrast, spared so many senators that the wonder of it is that they slew any at all!

Sulla, however, established himself as victor, while Marius still lived, in that very Capitol which had been successfully defended against the Gauls. It was from there that he issued his bloody decrees; and when Marius escaped by fleeing (although he was soon to return, fiercer and bloodier than before), Sulla in the Capitol deprived many persons of life and property even by senatorial decree. Then, when Sulla departed, what did the faction of Marius regard as sacred? For they did not even spare Mucius, a citizen, senator and pontiff, clinging in piteous embrace to that very altar where, as they say, the fate of Rome resides. Moreover, Sulla's final list of proscriptions, to say nothing of the innumerable other deaths, cut the throats of more senators than the Gauls were able even to plunder.

30 Of the numerous and most grave series of wars
which preceded the advent of Christ

How shameless our adversaries are, then, how rash, how impudent, how foolish – or, rather – how mad, when they do not impute those earlier misfortunes to their own gods, yet attribute the more recent ones to our Christ! As the Romans' own authors attest, those cruel civil wars were more bitter than all their foreign wars. Indeed, they deemed the commonwealth to have been not so much afflicted by them as entirely destroyed. But those wars began long before the advent of Christ, and a chain of causes linked one crime to another. The wars of Marius and Sulla led to the wars of Sertorius and Catiline, the former of whom was proscribed and the latter nurtured by Sulla. There followed the war of Lepidus and Catulus, of whom the one desired to rescind and the other to defend the enactments of Sulla. Next again came the wars of Pompey and Caesar. Pompey, on the one hand, had been a supporter of Sulla, whose power he now equalled or even surpassed. Caesar, on the other, could not bear the power of Pompey, but only because he did not have it himself; yet he exceeded it in turn when Pompey was defeated and slain. These wars then led to another Caesar, afterwards called Augustus, in whose reign Christ was born.

Augustus himself waged many civil wars, and in these also there perished many men of the greatest renown, among them Cicero, a man most skilled in the art of governing a commonwealth. Gaius Caesar, indeed, when he had vanquished Pompey, had exercised his victor's power with clemency towards the citizens, and granted both life and honours to his opponents. He was, however, suspected of wishing to be king; and so certain noble senators conspired to defend the liberty of the commonwealth and slew him in the very Senate House. Next, there appeared as a successor to his power a man of very different character, stained and corrupted by every vice: Antony, who was vehemently resisted by Cicero in the name of that same liberty of the fatherland. Then emerged a young man of remarkable character: that other Caesar, the adopted son of Gaius Caesar, who was afterwards, as I said, called Augustus. This youthful Caesar was favoured by Cicero, in order that his power might be nurtured in opposition to Antony. So blind and unable to foresee the future was Cicero that he hoped that, when the dominion of

Antony had been repulsed and crushed, Augustus Caesar would restore liberty to the commonwealth. But when that young man whose honour and power Cicero had promoted had made a kind of alliance with Antony and subdued to his own rule that very liberty of the commonwealth on behalf of which Cicero had issued so many warnings, he allowed Cicero himself to be slain.

31 How impudent are those who, because the worship of the gods is not allowed, attribute the misfortunes of the present time to Christ even though such great disasters also occurred when the gods were worshipped

Let those who are ungrateful to Christ for His great goodness accuse their own gods of these great evils, then. It is certain that, when these evil deeds were done, the altars of the divine beings were warm 'with Sabeian incense and fragrant with fresh garlands'.⁷⁹ Then, their priesthoods were renowned; their shrines were resplendent; there were sacrifices; there were games; there were ecstasies in the temples. Yet the blood of so many citizens was still shed indiscriminately by citizens not only in other places, but also, indeed, in the midst of the very altars of the gods. Cicero did not choose to seek refuge in a temple because Mucius had already chosen to do so in vain. Those, however, who now reproach the Christian age have far less reason to complain than Cicero or Mucius. For they either fled for sanctuary to those places most deeply hallowed to Christ, or were indeed led into those places by the barbarians themselves, so that they might live.

Omitting the many instances that I have already cited, and not calling to mind others too tedious to mention, this much I know, and anyone who judges impartially will readily acknowledge it: that if the human race had received the teaching of Christ before the Punic Wars, and if, thereafter, so great a devastation had been visited upon Europe and Africa by those wars, there is no one of those whose accusations we now suffer who would not have attributed such misfortunes to the Christian religion. Their reproaches would have been still more intolerable if – still speaking of matters which

⁷⁹ Virgil, *Aen.*, 1,416.

specifically concern the Romans – the Christian religion had been received and spread abroad before the invasion of the Gauls, or before the flooding of the Tiber, or before the fires that devastated Rome, or before the greatest evil of all, the Civil Wars.

There were other evils also, so incredible when they occurred that they were numbered among the prodigies. But if these things had happened in the Christian age, to whom would they have been imputed but the Christian people, as though they were crimes? I make no mention of those things which were more surprising than harmful: cattle speaking, infants not yet born calling out certain words from their mothers' wombs, snakes flying, women and hens being changed into the male sex, and other similar things which are recorded in the Romans' books, not of fable, but of history. Whether these things be true or false, they bring no harm to men, but only astonishment. But when it rained earth, when it rained chalk, when it rained stones (not what are called hailstones, but real stones): these things were certainly able to do grievous harm. We have read in their books that the fires of Etna, flowing down from the summit of the mountain to the neighbouring shore, made the sea boil, so that rocks were burnt and the pitch in ships melted. This, at any rate, was no slight harm, however incredible. Again, their authors record that, in the same fiery heat, Sicily was buried under so great a quantity of ash that the houses of the town of Catana were destroyed and buried under them. Moved to pity by this calamity, the Romans reduced their tribute for that year.⁸⁰ Again, in Africa, which had by then become a Roman province, they say that there was a prodigious multitude of locusts, which, after they had consumed the fruit and the leaves of trees, were driven into the sea in one vast and measureless cloud.⁸¹ When they were cast up dead on the shore and the air was polluted by them, there ensued so great a pestilence that in the kingdom of Masinissa alone, eight hundred thousand persons are said to have perished, and many more did so in the districts near the coast. Of the thirty thousand soldiers then at Utica, they say that only ten thousand survived.

⁸⁰ Cf. Orosius, *Hist.*, 5,13. But Orosius says that the tribute was remitted for ten years.

⁸¹ Livy, 40.

Since, then, we endure such vain reproaches as we do, we are obliged to ask, by way of reply: if such events were witnessed in the Christian age, which of them would not be attributed to the Christian religion? Yet our adversaries do not attribute such things to their own gods. Rather, they demand that these be worshipped for the sake of escaping present disasters, even though much greater disasters befell those who worshipped them in days gone by.

Book IV

I Of the matters discussed in the first book

When I began to speak of the City of God, I thought it necessary first of all to answer its enemies, who pursue earthly joys and long only for fleeting things. They rail against the Christian religion, which is the one saving and true religion, for whatever sorrows they suffer in respect of these things. And they do this even though they suffer rather through the mercy of God in admonishing them than from His severity in punishing.

Among those enemies there are many ignorant men whose hatred of us is all the more grievously inflamed by the authority of the learned. For the former believe that the extraordinary events which have occurred in their own day did not occur at all in times gone by; and they are supported in this belief even by those who know it to be false, but who conceal their knowledge in order to seem to have just cause for murmuring against us. It was necessary, therefore, to demonstrate from the books in which their own authors have recorded and published the history of times gone by, that matters are far other than the ignorant suppose. At the same time, it was necessary to teach that the false gods whom once they worshipped openly, and still worship in secret, are most vile spirits and malignant and deceitful demons: so much so that they take delight in crimes which, whether real or fictitious, are nonetheless their own, and which they have desired to have celebrated for them at their own festivals. For human infirmity cannot be restrained from the perpetration of damnable deeds for as long as a seemingly divine authority is given to the imitation of such deeds.

In showing these things, I have not relied upon mere conjecture. I have drawn partly upon my own recent memory – for I have myself witnessed such spectacles as are exhibited to these deities¹ – and partly upon the writings of those who have left accounts of these matters to posterity, not as a reproach to their gods, but in their honour. Varro, who is esteemed among our adversaries as a most learned man and the weightiest of authorities, is a case in point. He compiled separate books concerning things human and

¹ Bk II,4; cf. *Confess.*, I,10; 3,2

things divine, assigning some books to the human and some to the divine, according to the dignity of each. And he placed theatrical displays not among things human, but among the divine (although, if there had been none but good and honourable men in the city, theatrical displays could have had no rightful place even among things human). In doing this, he did not rely merely on his own authority. Rather, being born and educated in Rome, he found such displays already established among things divine.

At the end of the first book, I briefly set down the matters which were to be discussed next. Then, in the two books which followed, I discussed some of them. I see, therefore, that I must now pay the remainder of my debt, to satisfy the expectations of my readers.

2 Of those things which are contained in the second and third books

I undertook to say something against those who attribute to our religion the disasters lately sustained by the Roman commonwealth. I promised also that I should recall the evils – as many of them and as great as I could remember, or as might seem sufficient – which the city of Rome, or the provinces belonging to her empire, suffered even before it was forbidden to sacrifice to demons. For the Romans would no doubt have attributed all such evils to us if our religion had by then shone upon them or had already prohibited the sacrilegious reign of the demons.

These things, I think, I have disposed of satisfactorily in the second and third books. In the second, I dealt with moral evils, which are to be regarded either as the only evils or as the greatest evils. In the third, I dealt with those evils which only fools dread to suffer: namely, those of the body and of external things, to which good men also are commonly subject. But our adversaries accept moral evils – evils by which they are themselves made evil – not only patiently, but even with pleasure.

Yet how few of the incidents in the history of that one city and her empire have I mentioned! – not even all of them down to the time of Augustus Caesar. What if I had resolved to recall and enlarge upon not those evils which men do to one another, but those which befall the earth from the elements of the universe itself?

Apuleius briefly touches upon these things in one part of the book which he wrote called *De mundo*, saying that all earthly things are subject to change, overthrow and destruction. For indeed, to use his own words,

by violent tremors of the earth the ground has opened and swallowed up cities with their peoples; whole regions have been washed away by sudden deluges; those also which had formerly been continents have been made into islands by the coming of strange floods; and others have been made accessible on foot by the withdrawing of the sea. Cities have been overthrown by wind and storm; fires have erupted from the clouds, by which regions of the east have been consumed and have perished; and on western coasts the same devastations have been wrought by the bursting forth of waters and floods. So also, rivers of fire kindled by the gods once flowed from the craters on Etna's summit and poured down the slopes like a torrent.²

If I had wished to collect historical examples of this kind from wherever I could, when would I have finished? Yet all these things came to pass in the times before the name of Christ had suppressed those rites of the Romans: those rites which are so vain and inimical to true salvation.

I promised also³ that I would show what the morals of the Romans were, and for what reason the true God, in Whose power are all kingdoms, deigned to help them increase their empire. I promised to show how little help they received from those whom they esteemed as gods, and how much harm those gods did instead, by their deceit and falsehood. I see, then, that I must now speak of these things, and especially of the growth of the Roman empire. For I have already said much, especially in the second book, of the poisonous deceit of the demons whom the Romans worshipped as gods, and of the great damage that those demons did to their morals.

In all three of the books now completed, however, I have also shown, whenever opportunity arose, how much solace God has granted to good and evil men alike, even in the midst of the evils of war, through the name of Christ, to which the barbarians paid such great honour beyond the custom of war. In this way. 'He

² Cf. *De mundo*, 34.

³ Bk 1,36.

maketh His sun to rise on the good and the evil, and giveth rain to the just and to the unjust.³⁴

**3 Whether so broad an empire, when acquired only
by warfare, should be counted among the good
things of the wise or happy**

Let us now see, therefore, how it is that our adversaries venture to attribute the great breadth and duration of the Roman empire to the gods: to those gods whom they claim to have worshipped with honour even when their service consisted of vile games and the ministry of vile men.

First, however, I should like to devote a little time to the following question. Is it wise or prudent to wish to glory in the breadth and magnitude of an empire when you cannot show that the men whose empire it is are happy? For the Romans always lived in dark fear and cruel lust, surrounded by the disasters of war and the shedding of blood which, whether that of fellow citizens or enemies, was human nonetheless. The joy of such men may be compared to the fragile splendour of glass: they are horribly afraid lest it be suddenly shattered.

That this may be understood more clearly, let us not allow ourselves to be swayed by idle bombast. Let us not allow the edge of our attention to be dulled by the splendid names of things when we hear of 'peoples', 'kingdoms' and 'provinces'. Instead, let us imagine two men (for each individual man, like one letter in a text, is, as it were, an element of the city or kingdom, no matter how extensive it is in its occupation of the earth). Let us suppose one of these men to be poor, or at any rate of moderate means, and the other to be very wealthy. The wealthy man, however, is troubled by fears; he pines with grief; he burns with greed. He is never secure; he is always unquiet and panting from endless confrontations with his enemies. To be sure, he adds to his patrimony in immense measure by these miseries; but alongside these additions he also heaps up the most bitter cares. By contrast, the man of moderate means is self-sufficient on his small and circumscribed estate. He is beloved

³⁴ Matt. 5,45.

of his own family, and rejoices in the most sweet peace with kindred, neighbours and friends. He is devoutly religious, well disposed in mind, healthy in body, frugal in life, chaste in morals, untroubled in conscience. I do not know if anyone could be such a fool as to dare to doubt which to prefer. As, therefore, in the case of these two men, so in two families, two peoples, two kingdoms, the same principle of tranquillity applies; and if we use this principle vigilantly, to guide our search, we shall very easily see where vanity dwells, and where happiness lies.

It is beneficial, then, that good men should rule far and wide and long, worshipping the true God and serving Him with true rites and good morals. Nor is this so much beneficial to them as to those over whom they rule. For as far as they themselves are concerned, their godliness and probity, which are great gifts of God, suffice to bring them the true felicity through which this life may be well spent and eternal life received hereafter. In this world, therefore, the rule of good men is of profit not so much to themselves as to human affairs. The reign of the wicked, however, does injury only to those who rule. For they lay waste their own souls by their greater licence in wickedness, whereas those who are placed under them in servitude are not harmed except by their own iniquity. For whatever evils are inflicted upon just men by unjust masters are not the punishment of crime, but the test of virtue. Therefore the good man is free even if he is a slave, whereas the bad man is a slave even if he reigns: a slave, not to one man, but, what is worse, to as many masters as he has vices.⁵ When Divine Scripture speaks of these vices, it says, 'For of whom any man is overcome, to the same he is also the bond-slave.'⁶

4 How like kingdoms without justice are to bands of robbers

Justice removed, then, what are kingdoms but great bands of robbers? What are bands of robbers themselves but little kingdoms? The band itself is made up of men; it is governed by the authority of a ruler; it is bound together by a pact of association; and the loot

⁵ Cf. Seneca, *Epist.* 47, 17.

⁶ 2 Pet. 2, 19.

is divided according to an agreed law. If, by the constant addition of desperate men, this scourge grows to such a size that it acquires territory, establishes a seat of government, occupies cities and subjugates peoples, it assumes the name of kingdom more openly. For this name is now manifestly conferred upon it not by the removal of greed, but by the addition of impunity. It was a pertinent and true answer which was made to Alexander the Great by a pirate whom he had seized. When the king asked him what he meant by infesting the sea, the pirate defiantly replied: 'The same as you do when you infest the whole world; but because I do it with a little ship I am called a robber, and because you do it with a great fleet, you are an emperor.'⁷

5 Of the revolt of the gladiators, whose power came to resemble the dignity of kings

I here refrain from asking what sort of men they were that Romulus gathered together. For great care was taken in their case to ensure that, when they were removed from the life that they had led and received into the fellowship of the city, they should cease to dwell on the punishments due to them. Henceforth, therefore, they became more peaceful participants in human affairs. For it was the fear of such punishments which had driven them to ever greater crimes.

I say this, however: that the Roman empire itself, which had already grown great by subjugating many peoples, and which was an object of terror to the rest, was itself bitterly injured, gravely alarmed, and with no small effort avoided a disastrous reversal, when a very small number of gladiators, fleeing from the games in Campania, assembled a large army, appointed three generals, and laid waste the whole breadth of Italy with the utmost cruelty. Let our adversaries tell us what gods helped those men to rise from a small and inconsiderable band of robbers to a kingdom that the Romans, for all their great forces and fortresses, were obliged to fear. Or will they deny that the gladiators received divine assistance because they did not remain in power for long?

⁷ Cicero, *De rep.*, 3,14,24.

As if, however, the life of any man were long. According to that reasoning, the gods help no one to rule; for every man dies in a little while, nor is that to be deemed a benefit which vanishes like a mist in a moment of time for every man, and so for all men one by one. After all, what does it matter to those who worshipped the gods under Romulus and are now long dead that the Roman empire increased so greatly after their death? They are now pleading their causes before the gods of the underworld. (Whether those causes are good or bad is not pertinent to our present argument.) This remark applies even to those who, in the few days of their life, have passed swiftly and with haste through the imperial office itself, bearing with them the heavy burdens of their own deeds (although the office itself has endured throughout long ages of time, as one generation of mortals has died and been succeeded by another).

If, however, even those benefits which endure only for the shortest time are to be attributed to the gods, then those gladiators must have received considerable help. They burst the bonds of their servile condition: they fled; they escaped. They assembled a great and most powerful army, obedient to the counsel and commands of their kings and much feared by the proud might of Rome. Remaining unsubdued by several Roman generals, they seized much plunder, gained many victories, enjoyed whatever pleasures they wished, and did what their lust suggested. Until they were finally conquered – a feat achieved only with the greatest difficulty – they lived sublime and enthroned. Let us, however, come to weightier matters.

6 Of the greed of King Ninus, who was the first to make war on his neighbours in order to rule more widely

Justinus, who followed Trogus Pompeius in writing Greek – or, rather, foreign – history not only in Latin, as Trogus did, but also with brevity, commences his first book as follows.

At the beginning of the affairs of tribes and nations, power was in the hands of kings, who were raised to the pinnacle of their majesty not by wooing the people, but by the knowledge that good men had of their moderation. The people were not bound by any laws. It was the custom rather to defend than extend

the boundaries of empire, and the sway of each king was confined to his own fatherland. Ninus, king of the Assyrians, was the first of all those who changed the ancient and, as it were, ancestral custom of the nations, through a new greed for empire. He first made war on his neighbours and extended his conquests as far as the borders of Libya, over peoples as yet untrained in the art of resistance.

And a little later he says: 'Ninus confirmed the greatness of the dominion he had won by constantly adding new possessions to it. When he had conquered his neighbours, therefore, he progressed to others, strengthened by the accession of new forces, and, since each victory became the instrument by which the next was won, he subjugated all the peoples of the east.'⁸

Now whatever may be the fidelity of the accounts written by Justinus or Trogus (for other more faithful accounts show that they are unreliable in certain respects), it is nonetheless an established fact among other writers that the kingdom of the Assyrians was spread far and wide by King Ninus. And so long did it endure that the Roman empire has not yet achieved the same age. For as those persons who study the chronology of history have written, this kingdom endured for 1,240 years from the first year in which Ninus began to reign until it was transferred to the Medes.⁹ But to wage war against neighbours, and to go on from there against others, crushing and subjugating peoples who have done no harm, out of the mere desire to rule: what else is this to be called than great robbery?

7 Whether earthly kingdoms are either aided or hindered in their rise and fall by the gods

If the kingdom of Ninus became so great, and endured for so long, without the help of the gods, why is the ample territory and long duration of the Roman empire attributed to the gods? Whatever is the cause of the one is surely also the cause of the other. But if our adversaries contend that the success of Ninus is indeed to be attri-

⁸ Justinus, *Epitoma historiarum philippicarum Pompei Trogi*, ed. F. Rühl and O. Seel (Leipzig, 1935).

⁹ Cf. Eusebius/Jerome, *Chron.*, ed. R. Helm (Leipzig, 1929), 83a, 9f.

buted to the help of the gods, I ask: of whose gods? For the other nations which Ninus conquered and subdued did not worship any gods different from those of the Assyrians. Alternatively, if the Assyrians did have gods of their own who were, as it were, craftsmen more highly skilled in the art of building and maintaining an empire, were these dead, then, when, in their turn, the Assyrians lost their empire? Or did they prefer to go over to the Medes because their wages were not paid, or because higher wages were offered? And then to the Persians, when Cyrus invited them and made them a still better offer? This last nation, indeed, since the time of the very extensive but exceedingly short-lived kingdom of Alexander of Macedon, has maintained its sway down to the present day over considerable territories in the east.

If this is so, then the gods have been faithless in deserting their own people and going over to the enemy. But this is a thing that even a man, Camillus, did not do. For, after he had defeated and subdued a most hostile city, he tasted the ingratitude of Rome, on whose behalf he had conquered; yet he later forgot the injury and, mindful of his native land, rescued it a second time from the Gauls. Or perhaps the gods are not as mighty as gods ought to be, and can be overcome by human counsel or strength. Alternatively, if, when they wage war, the gods are not defeated by men, but by other gods who are the special gods of certain cities, then they have enmities among themselves, which each takes up on behalf of his own faction. The city of Rome ought not, then, to have worshipped its own gods more than the others from whom its own gods might, after all, have received aid.

We do not, of course, know whether this charge of partiality or flight or migration or desertion in battle on the part of the gods is true or not. It is true, however, that, when these kingdoms were lost and transferred through great disasters in war, the name of Christ had not yet been proclaimed in those times and on those parts of the earth. If, when their kingdom was taken away from the Assyrians after more than 1,200 years, the Christian religion had already proclaimed another, eternal, kingdom there, and had forbidden the sacrilegious worship of false gods, what would the foolish men of that nation have said? No doubt they would have said that a kingdom which had been preserved for so long could not have perished for any other reason than the desertion of its own religion

and the reception of Christianity. In that foolish charge which might well have been brought, then, let our adversaries see themselves as in a mirror and, if there is any shame in them, let them blush to bring a similar charge of their own.

The Roman empire, however, is only afflicted, not transformed. The same thing has befallen it in other times, before the name of Christ was proclaimed, yet it has recovered after such affliction. Such a recovery is not, indeed, to be despaired of even now, for who knows the will of God in such a case?

8 By the help of which of the gods could the Romans suppose that their empire was extended and preserved, when they believed that even the care of single things was hardly to be entrusted to any one god?

Let us next ask, if you please, which god, or which gods, out of the great swarm that the Romans worshipped, did most to extend and preserve their empire. Surely they do not dare to attribute any part of a task so glorious and so full of the highest dignity to Cloacina? Or to Volupia, who derives her name from voluptuousness? Or to Lubentina, whose name comes from lust [*libido*]? Or to Vaticanus, who presides over the wails [*vagitus*] of infants? Or to Cunina, who looks after their cradles [*cunæ*]? But how is it possible to mention all the names of the gods and goddesses in one part of this book? For the Romans themselves were scarcely able to contain them all in the great tomes in which they assigned to each divine being a particular sphere of activity.

They did not think it proper to entrust their land to any one god. Rather, they entrusted the countryside [*rus*] to Rusina, the mountain terraces [*iuga*] to the god Jugatinus, hills [*colles*] to the goddess Col latina, and over the valleys they set Vallonia. Nor could they even find one Segetia to whom to commend the general care of cornfields [*segetes*]. Rather, for as long as the seed-corn [*sata*] was under the ground they chose to have the goddess Seia set over it. Then, when it was above the ground and ripening, the goddess Segetia assumed responsibility; and when the grain was harvested and stored, the goddess Tutilina was invoked to keep it safely [*tutare*]. Who would not have thought a single goddess Segetia equal to the task of watch-

ing over the corn all the way from its grassy beginnings to the ripe ears? But one was not enough for men who so loved a multitude of gods that each wretched soul, scorning the chaste embrace of the one true God, prostituted himself to a horde of demons. Thus, they set Proserpine over the germinating seeds; the god Nodotus over the joints and nodes of the stems; and the goddess Volutina over the sheathes [*involumenta*] of the ears. When the sheathes opened [*patescunt*], the goddess Patelana took charge of them, so that the ears might emerge. When the corn stood level in the field, with new ears, this was attributed to the goddess Hostilina, so called because the ancients used the term *hostire* to mean 'to make level'. When the corn was in flower, the goddess Flora presided; when it was milky, the god Lacturnus; when it ripened, the goddess Matuta; and when the weeds were cleared – that is, removed [*runcantur*] from the field – the goddess Runcina.

I do not mention them all; for, though our adversaries are not abashed by all this, it bores me. I have, however, said these few things in order to make it understood that the Romans certainly do not venture to assert that it was these deities who established, increased and preserved their empire. For each of these deities was so busy with his own duties that no one thing was ascribed as a whole to any one of them. How could Segetia care for the empire when she was not allowed to take care of the corn and the trees at the same time? How could Cunina think of arms when she was not permitted to go beyond the care of the little ones? How could Nodotus help in war when he was concerned, not even with the sheath of the ear, but only with the nodes of the joints? Everyone has a single doorkeeper for his house, and, because this doorkeeper is a man, he is quite sufficient. But the Romans have set three gods there: Forculus for the doors [*fores*], Cardea for the hinges [*cardines*], and Limentinus for the threshold [*limen*]! Forculus, then, was not able to guard the door, hinges and threshold all at once!

9 Whether the extent and duration of the Roman empire should have been ascribed to Jupiter, who is considered by his worshippers to be the highest god

Omitting, therefore, or for the time being leaving aside, this swarm of gods, we must next enquire as to the part played by the greater gods in making Rome great enough to rule for so long over so many

nations. No doubt, then, this was the work of Jupiter; for he it is whom they wish to call the king of all the gods and goddesses. This is shown by his sceptre, and by the Capitol on its high hill. The Romans publish a saying concerning this god which, though that of a poet, is nonetheless most apt: 'All things are full of Jupiter.'¹⁰ Varro believes that he is worshipped, though called by another name, even by those who worship one God only, without an image.¹¹ If this is so, however, why has he been treated so insultingly at Rome, and among other peoples also, by having an image erected to him? This fact displeased Varro so much that, though he was himself in thrall to the perverse customs of so great a city, he did not in the least hesitate to say and write that those who had set up images for the people had both diminished reverence and increased error.

10 What opinions were followed by those who set different gods over different parts of the world

Moreover, why is a wife, Juno, joined to him, and called 'sister and spouse'?¹² Because, our adversaries say, we have Jupiter in the aether and Juno in the air, and these two elements are conjoined, the one being higher and the other lower.¹³ It is not he, then, of whom it is said, 'All things are full of Jupiter', if Juno also fills some part of things. Or do both of them fill both regions, with husband and wife in both of these elements and in each of them at the same time? Why, then, is the aether given to Jupiter and the air to Juno? Besides, these two divine beings should have been enough: why is it that the sea is assigned to Neptune and the earth to Pluto? Moreover, in order that these also should not remain without wives, Salacia is added to Neptune and Proserpine to Pluto. For, they say, just as Juno holds the lower part of the heavens – that is, the air – so Salacia possesses the lower part of the sea and Proserpine the lower part of the earth.

Our adversaries seek a way to patch up their fables, but they do not find one. For if these fables were true, their ancient writers

¹⁰ Virgil, *Ecl.*, 3,60.

¹¹ Cf. Ch. 31 below.

¹² Virgil, *Aen.*, 1,47.

¹³ Cf. Euripides, *Frag.* 877; 941.

would have said that there are three elements of the universe rather than four. In this way, each of these three pairs of gods would have its own particular element allotted to it. As it is, however, such writers have affirmed beyond any doubt that the aether is one thing and the air another. But water, whether higher or lower, is still water; or, even supposing that there is a difference between higher and lower water, is it so great that the water ceases to be water? And what can the lower part of the earth be made of except earth, no matter how great the difference by which it is distinguished from the higher part?

So, then, behold: the entire corporeal world is complete in these four, or three, elements. Where will Minerva be, then? What element will she occupy? What will she fill? For she was placed in the Capitol at the same time as Jupiter and Juno, although she is not the daughter of both of them. Or if they say that Minerva occupies the upper part of the aether and that this is why the poets have concocted the tale that she was born from the head of Jupiter, why, then, is it not she rather than Juno who is considered to be the queen of the gods, since she is higher than Jupiter? Is it, perhaps, because it was thought wrong to place the daughter above the father? Why, therefore, was this rule of justice not observed in the case of Jupiter himself, in relation to Saturn? Is it because the latter was vanquished? Did they fight, then? Certainly not, say our adversaries: such nonsense belongs only to fables. So be it: let us not believe fables; let us believe better things of the gods. But why, in that case, did the Romans not assign to the father of Jupiter a place of honour at least equal to, if not higher than, that of his son? Because, they say, Saturn is the duration of time:¹⁴ those who worship Saturn, therefore, worship time; and it is suggested that Jupiter, king of the gods, was born of time. Why, after all, is it improper to say that Jupiter and Juno are born of time if he is the heavens and she the earth? – for heaven and earth were certainly created. Indeed, the Romans' learned and wise men say as much in their books; for that saying of Virgil does not come from poetic fancy, but from the books of the philosophers: 'Then Aether, the Father Almighty, in fecund showers, descended into the lap of his joyful spouse'¹⁵ – that is, into the lap of Tellus, or Terra. Although,

¹⁴ Cicero, *De nat. deor.*, 2, 25, 64.

¹⁵ Virgil, *Georg.*, 2, 325ff.

here again, they will have it that there are certain differences, and they consider that, in the earth itself, Terra is one thing, Tellus another, and Tellumo yet another. And they depict all these gods as being called by their own names, distinguished by their own offices, and venerated at their own altars with their own rites. This same earth they also call the mother of the gods: as if the inventions of the poets might be more tolerable if, according to their books – not of poetry, but of sacred lore – Juno is not only the sister and spouse, but also the mother, of Jupiter! The same earth is Ceres; the same, they wish to say, is also Vesta;¹⁶ while they assert even more frequently that Vesta is none other than the fire belonging to the hearth, without which the city could not exist. This is why it is the custom for virgins to serve her, because, just as nothing is born of a virgin, so nothing is born of fire. It certainly was appropriate, though, that all this variety should have been abolished and extinguished by Him Who was born of a Virgin!

For who can tolerate it that, while they attribute so much honour and, as it were, chastity to fire, our adversaries nonetheless do not blush to say from time to time that Vesta is also Venus? Thus, the honour shown to virginity by the handmaidens of Vesta vanishes. For if Vesta is the same as Venus, how have virgins rightly served her by abstaining from the pursuits of Venus? Or are there two Venuses, one a virgin and the other a woman of experience? Or three, indeed: one the goddess of virgins, who is also Vesta; one the goddess of wives, and one of harlots? To the last, indeed, the Phoenicians used to offer a gift by prostituting their daughters before marrying them to husbands. Which of these is the wife of Vulcan? Certainly not the virgin, since she has a husband; and let us not say that it is the harlot, lest we seem to do injury to the son of Juno and colleague of Minerva. It is understood, therefore, that Vulcan's wife is the Venus who belongs to married women; although we certainly do not wish them to imitate her in what she did with Mars!

'Again', they say, 'you revert to fables'. But what kind of justice is it to reproach us for speaking thus of their gods, yet not to reproach themselves for taking such great pleasure in witnessing the crimes of those gods in the theatres? Moreover, those theatrical displays,

¹⁶ Cf. Ovid, *Fast.*, 6,299.

portraying the crimes of the gods, were instituted in honour of those same gods! This would be unbelievable if it were not proven quite beyond doubt.

11 Of the many gods whom the more learned defend as being one and the same with Jupiter

Thus, let our adversaries make whatever assertions they please in their reasonings concerning the natural order. On one account, let Jupiter be the soul of this corporeal world, who fills and moves that whole mass¹⁷ which is built and compacted out of the four elements, or as many elements as they like. On another, let him grant parts of it to his sister and brothers. On another again, let him be the aether, so that he may embrace Juno, the air, spread out beneath him. Then again, let him be the whole heaven, including the air, and let him impregnate with fertile showers and seeds the earth which is at one and the same time his wife and his mother (for such a thing is not thought disgusting among the divine beings). Or again (not that it is necessary to dwell upon all the possibilities), let him be the one god of whom many think that the noblest of all the poets speaks when he says: 'For God passes through all things: all lands, and the tracts of the sea, and the depths of the heavens.'¹⁸ Let him be Jupiter in the aether; Juno in the air; Neptune in the sea, and also Salacia in the lower parts of the sea. Let him be Pluto in the earth; Proserpine in the lower parts of the earth; Vesta in the domestic hearth; Vulcan in the blacksmith's forge; the sun and moon and stars among the heavenly bodies; Apollo among diviners; Mercury among the merchants. Let him be Janus the opener and Terminus the closer. Let him be Saturn in time; Mars and Bellona in war; Liber in the vineyards; Ceres in the cornfields; Diana in the forests; Minerva in learning. Finally, let him be in the horde of plebeian gods, so to speak. Under the name of Liber, let him preside over the seed of men, and, as Libera, over that of women. Let him be Diespater, who brings the newly born forth into the light of day [*qui partum perducit ad diem*]. Let him be Mena, whom they set over the menstruation of women; Lucina, who is invoked by women

¹⁷ Cf. Virgil, *Ecl.*, 3,60; *Aen.*, 6,727.

¹⁸ Virgil, *Georg.*, 4,221f.

in childbirth; let him bring help [*opem*] to the newly born by receiving them into the bosom of the earth, and in this capacity let him be called Ops. Let him open their mouths to wail, and be called the god Vaticanus; let him lift them up [*levare*] from the earth and be called the goddess Levana; let him protect their cradles and be called Cunina. Let it be none other than he who is made manifest in those goddesses who sing the fates of the newly born and are called Carmentes. Let him preside over fortuitous events and be called Fortuna. Let him, as the goddess Rumina, bring milk out of the breast for the infant, because the ancients called the breast *ruma*. As the goddess Potina, let him furnish drink [*potio*]; and, as the goddess Educa, let him bring food [*esca*]. From the fear [*pavor*] of infants, let him be called Paventia; from the coming of hope, Venilia; from pleasure, Volupia; from action, Agenoria. From the stimulants which excite a man to much action, let him be called the goddess Stimula. Let him be the goddess Strenia, from making men vigorous; Numeria, from teaching to count; Camena, from teaching to sing [*canere*]. Let him also be the god Consus, from bringing counsel, and the goddess Sentia, from inspiring opinions [*sententiae*]. Let him be the goddess Juventas, who, after the robe of boyhood is laid aside, takes charge of the beginning of young manhood; and let him also be Fortuna Barbata, who provides adults with a beard. (For some reason, the Romans refuse to honour this deity by making it a male god called Barbatus from *barba*, as Nodotus is so called from *nodus*. Since he has whiskers, they could at least have called him Fortunius and not Fortuna!) As the god Jugatinus, let him yoke married couples together; and, when the girdle of the virgin bride is unloosed, let him be invoked as the goddess Virginnensis. Let him be Mutunus or Tutunus, who is called Priapus by the Greeks. If our adversaries are not ashamed, let the one god Jupiter be all these that I have named and whatever others I have not named (for I have not thought it worthwhile to name them all). Let him be all these gods and goddesses, or, as some say, let all these be parts of him or powers of his. This is how matters seem to those who are pleased to think of him as the soul of the world: an opinion which is that of most supposedly great and learned men.

But, if all this is true (and this is a question which, for the time being, I do not consider), what would they lose if, with more prudent moderation, they were simply to worship the one god Jupiter?

What part of him would be slighted if he himself were to be worshipped? If, however, they are afraid lest parts of him should be angry because overlooked or neglected, then it is not true, as they contend, that his whole life is that of a single living being which contains all the gods as powers or members or parts of itself. Rather, one part can be angered more than another; and, if one is placated while another is enraged, then each has its own life distinct from the rest. But if it is said that all of them together – that is, the whole of Jupiter himself – could be offended if his parts were not worshipped singly and individually, this is a foolish assertion. For, surely, none of them could be overlooked if he who has them all were worshipped.

Leaving aside the other assertions of our adversaries, which are innumerable, they say that all the stars are parts of Jupiter, and that all of them are alive and have rational souls, and therefore are indisputably gods. But they do not see how many of them they neglect to worship, or for how many of them they do not build temples or establish altars, or to how very few of the stars they have thought of establishing such things and offering individual sacrifices. If, therefore, those stars who are not worshipped individually are angered, do our adversaries not fear to live with a few placated and the whole sky angry? If, however, they are worshipping all the stars because they worship Jupiter, in whom all the stars are contained, they could, simply by this compendious method, make supplication to all the gods in him alone. By this means, they would anger none of them because, in that one act, none would be slighted. By worshipping a few, on the other hand, they would furnish just cause for anger to the much greater number left aside: especially when Priapus, distended in his gross nakedness, is preferred to them as they shine forth from their supernal abode!

12 Of the opinion of those who have supposed God to be the soul of the world, and the world to be the body of God

What? Men of intelligence – or, indeed, men of any kind whatever, for no outstanding capacity is required here – should surely be prompted by all this to put aside their zeal for contention and consider the following question. Some say that God is the soul of the

world, and that the world is the body of that soul, so that the whole is one living being consisting of soul and body. They say also that this God is a kind of bosom of nature containing all things in Himself, so that from His soul, by which the whole mass of the world is quickened, the lives and souls of all living things are derived, each according to the manner of its birth. On this view, then, nothing at all remains which is not a part of God. If all this is so, however, who does not see what impious and irreligious consequences follow? Whenever anyone tramples on something, he tramples on a part of God! Whenever any animal is killed, a part of God is slaughtered! And I decline to speak of all those things which may occur to anyone who gives the matter some thought but which cannot be named without shame.

13 Of those who assert that only rational animals are parts of the one God

If, however, our adversaries contend that only rational creatures, such as men, are parts of God, I do not at all see how, if the whole world is God, they can exclude the beasts from the sum of His parts. But what need is there to argue this point? To speak only of the rational animal, that is, man: what more unworthy belief can there be than that a part of God is beaten when a boy is beaten? And who but one completely mad could bear to believe that God's parts might become lewd, wicked, impious and entirely damnable? Finally, why is He angry with those by whom He is not worshipped when it is by His own parts that He is not worshipped?

All that remains, therefore, for our adversaries to say is that all the gods have their own lives: that each one lives for himself, and that no one of them is a part of any other, but that all who can be known and worshipped ought to be worshipped separately. (There are so many of them, however, that they cannot all be known.) And since Jupiter presides over the other gods as king, I believe that it is he who is thought by the Romans to have established and extended their empire. For if it was not he who did this, what other god can they believe could have undertaken so great a work, when they are all occupied with their own duties and tasks and one does not intrude into the province of another? It is only by the king of

the gods, therefore, that a kingdom of men could have been propagated and increased.

14 That the growth of kingdoms is not properly ascribed to Jupiter, since, if Victory is a goddess, as the Romans say, she would be sufficient alone to accomplish this

But, here, I first ask why the empire itself is not a god of some kind. For why should it not be, if Victory is a goddess? Again, what need is there for Jupiter in this matter, if Victory is favourable and propitious and always goes to those whom she wishes to be victors? Even if Jupiter were idle or doing something else, what nations would remain unsubdued if Victory were favourable and propitious? What nations would not yield?

But is it perhaps displeasing to good men to conduct most wicked and unrighteous war, and to challenge, by unprovoked attack, peaceable neighbours who have done them no harm, in order to extend their rule? If this is their sentiment, I wholly approve and praise it.

15 Whether it is fitting for good men to wish to rule more widely

Let our adversaries now consider, therefore, whether it is fitting for good men to rejoice in the breadth of their rule. The iniquity of those against whom the Romans waged just wars certainly aided the growth of their empire. That empire would undoubtedly have remained small had their neighbours been peaceful and just, and so never provoked them into war by doing them harm. But, on the other hand, if men were always peaceful and just, human affairs would be happier and all kingdoms would be small, rejoicing in concord with their neighbours. There would be as many kingdoms among the nations of the world as there are now houses of the citizens of a city. Hence, waging war and extending their sway over conquered nations may seem to wicked men to be felicity, but to good men it is seen only as a necessary evil. Since it would be still worse for the unrighteous to lord it over the just, even this necessary

evil is not improperly called a kind of felicity. But it is beyond doubt a greater felicity to have concord with a good neighbour than to subdue a wicked neighbour by means of warfare.

He prays ill, therefore, who desires to have someone to hate or fear in order to have someone to conquer. If, then, it was by waging wars that were just, and not impious or unrighteous, that the Romans were able to acquire so great an empire, should they not worship even Foreign Iniquity as a goddess? For we see that Foreign Iniquity has contributed much to the increase in the breadth of the empire, by making foreigners so unjust that they become peoples against whom just wars may be waged and the empire thereby enlarged. And why may not Iniquity – at least that of foreign nations – be a goddess, if Fear and Dread and Fever have deserved to be Roman gods?

With the help of these two, then – that is, with the help of Foreign Iniquity and the goddess Victory – the empire has increased. For Iniquity stirs up the causes of war, and Victory brings the same wars to a happy conclusion, even when Jupiter is idle. After all, what part did Jupiter have in this? For all the things that might have been regarded as benefits conferred by him were instead called gods, worshipped as gods, and invoked in their own right for the parts which they had played. He might indeed have had some part to play here, if he himself were called 'Empire', just as the goddess is called Victory. Or, if empire is a gift of Jupiter, why may not victory also be held to be his gift? And it would indeed have been held to be so, had he been recognised and worshipped, not as a stone statue in the Capitol, but as the true 'King of kings and Lord of lords'.¹⁹

16 Why was it that, when the Romans assigned separate gods to every object and every activity, they chose to place the temple of Quiet outside the gates?

The Romans, therefore, assigned every single thing and almost every single activity to separate gods. They invoked the goddess Agenoria to stir men to action, and the goddess Stimula to incite men to acts beyond their normal capacity. They invoked the god-

¹⁹ Rev. 19,16.

dess Murcia, whose task, far from inspiring a man to act beyond his normal capacity, was, as Pomponius says, to make him *murcidus*, that is, excessively slothful; and they invoked the goddess Strenua to make men strenuous. I wonder at it greatly, then, that, whereas they accorded public worship to all these gods and goddesses, they refused such public worship to the goddess called Quiet, who brings quietude, but built her a temple outside the Colline gate. Was this proof of an unquiet mind? Or did it perhaps indicate that one who persists in the worship of that swarm, not, indeed, of gods, but of demons, cannot possess that quiet of which the true Physician speaks when He says, 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls'?²⁰

17 Whether Victory ought also to be esteemed as a goddess, if Jupiter is the supreme power

Or do they perhaps say that Jupiter sends the goddess Victory, and that she, obeying him as king of the gods, comes to those to whom he has commanded her to go, and takes her place at their side? This is truly said not of Jupiter, whom the Romans set up as king of the gods according to their own opinion, but of Him Who is the true King of the ages: that He sends not Victory, who has no substance, but His angel, and causes whom He wills to conquer. His counsel may be hidden, but it can never be unrighteous.

If Victory is a goddess, why is not Triumph also a god, and joined to Victory either as a husband or brother or son? To be sure, their beliefs concerning the gods are such that, if the poets had invented such things and were to be taken to task by us, our adversaries would reply that these were only the laughable imaginings of the poets, and not to be attributed to true deities. They did not laugh, however, when they themselves were worshipping such absurdities in the temples rather than merely reading about them in the works of the poets. They ought, then, to have entreated Jupiter for everything, and made supplications to him alone. For wherever he had sent Victory, she could not dare to resist him and do her own will instead, if she were a goddess and subject to him as her king.

²⁰ Matt. 11,29.

18 With what reason those who consider Felicity and Fortune to be goddesses have distinguished between them

What shall we say of the belief that Felicity is also a goddess? She has received a temple; she has been held to deserve an altar; appropriate rites are performed for her. She alone, surely, should be worshipped; for where she is present, what good thing can be lacking? What does a man want, that he should also deem Fortune a goddess, and worship her too? For is felicity one thing and fortune another? Fortune can indeed be bad as well as good, whereas if felicity is bad it is not felicity. But surely we ought to regard all the gods of both sexes, if they have sexes, as nothing but good. This is what Plato says,²¹ and so do other philosophers and rulers of commonwealths and peoples. How, then, is the goddess Fortune sometimes good and sometimes bad? Is it perhaps that when she is bad she is not a goddess, but is suddenly transformed into a malignant demon? In that case, how many such goddesses are there? Surely as many as there are fortunate men: that is, men who have good fortune. For there are also, simultaneously – at one and the same time, that is – many others who have bad fortune. Could Fortune, then, being one and the same goddess, be at one and the same time both good and bad – one thing for some and another for others? Or, being a goddess, is she always good? – in which case, she is the same as Felicity; so why are the different names used?

This is tolerable, however, for it is common for one thing to be called by different names. But why are there different temples, different altars and different rites? The reason, they say, is that felicity is what good men have earned by their previous good works, whereas fortune, which is called good without any regard to merit, befalls both good and bad men by chance [*fortuito*], which is why it is called fortune [*fortuna*]. How, then, is the goddess Fortune good, when she comes to both good men and bad without any discrimination? And why is she worshipped, when she is so blind that she runs up against anyone whatever at random, and clings even to those who despise her? On the other hand, if those who worship her do profit in some way, because they are seen and loved by her, then she follows merit, and does not come by chance; in which case, what has happened to the

²¹ *Rep.*, 2,379B.

definition of fortune? How is it that Fortune has received her very name from fortuitous happenings? For there is nothing to be gained from worshipping her if she is mere chance; but if she singles out her worshippers, to help them, then she is not mere chance. Or does Jupiter send her, too, wherever he likes? It is he who should be worshipped rather than Fortune, then, if Fortune cannot resist him when he commands her, and if he sends her wherever he wishes. Or, at least, let only the wicked worship her, who do not wish to acquire the merits by which the goddess Felicity might be won.

19 Of Fortuna Muliebris

The Romans attribute so much significance to this supposed deity whom they call Fortune that they tell how the image of her which was dedicated by the Roman women and called Fortuna Muliebris actually spoke.²² It is said to have declared, not once, but twice, that the women had correctly performed the dedicatory rites to her. If this is indeed true, we need not wonder at it; for it is not at all difficult for malignant demons to deceive. The Romans, however, would have been better advised to beware of the arts and trickeries of the demons; for it was the goddess who comes by chance who spoke, not she who comes to those who deserve her. It was Fortune who was ready to speak, and Felicity who was silent. And for what reason, other than to induce men not to live righteously once they had secured the favour of Fortune, who could bring them good luck even when they had not earned it by good conduct? In any case, if Fortune speaks, at least let it be with a male rather than a female voice. Otherwise, those who dedicated the image might be thought to have invented so great a miracle themselves, by women's gossip.

20 Of Virtue and Faith, whom the pagans honoured with temples and sacred rites while ignoring the other good qualities which should also have been worshipped if divinity was rightly attributed to these two

The Romans also made Virtue a goddess; and, indeed, if she really were a goddess she would be preferable to many of the

²² Valerius Maximus, 1,8,4.

others. As it is, however, because virtue is not a goddess but a gift of God, let it be obtained from Him by Whom alone it can be given. Then, the whole swarm of false gods will vanish. But why is Faith also believed to be a goddess, and why has she also received a temple and an altar? For whoever wisely acknowledges her makes a habitation for her in his own self. But how do the Romans know what Faith is, when her first and greatest duty is to cause men to believe in the one true God? And why was not Virtue enough? For does not virtue also include faith? They saw that virtue is to be divided into four kinds – prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. Since each of these in turn has its own divisions, however, faith is among the parts of justice. Indeed, it holds the highest place of all with those of us who know the meaning of the words, ‘The just shall live by faith,’²³

But I wonder at those persons who desire to have a multitude of gods. For if Faith is a goddess, why have they injured so many other goddesses by ignoring them, when they could have dedicated similar temples and altars to them? Why did temperance not deserve to be a goddess? – for many Roman chieftains gained no small glory in her name. And why is not fortitude a goddess? – for she was with Mucius when he thrust his right hand into the fire; and she was with Curtius when, for the good of the fatherland, he flung himself headlong into a yawning chasm in the earth. She was also with the two Decii, father and son, when they pledged themselves to death for the sake of the army. (Let us take it for granted that all these personages exhibited true fortitude: this is a question which we shall not here consider.) Again, why have wisdom and prudence not merited a place among the divine beings? Is it, perhaps, because all such virtues are worshipped under the general name of Virtue? If so, then, it would also have been possible to worship only one god, of whom the other gods are deemed to be parts. In any case, both Faith and Modesty are parts of the one Virtue, yet both of them have nonetheless been awarded altars in temples of their own.

²³ Hab. 2,4; Rom. 1,17; Gal. 3,11; Heb. 10,38.

21 That those who did not know the one God
should at least have been content with Virtue and
Felicity

It was not truth that made these virtues into goddesses, but vanity. For they are gifts of the true God, not goddesses themselves. But where there is virtue and felicity, why seek for anything more? What could satisfy the man for whom virtue and felicity are not enough? For virtue encompasses everything we should do, and felicity everything we should desire. If Jupiter was worshipped so that he might grant these things – for if extent and duration of rule are good things, they belong to this same felicity – then why is it not understood that they are not goddesses, but gifts of God? Even if they are deemed to be goddesses, however, there is at least no need to seek so great a swarm of other gods. For let our adversaries reflect upon the offices of all the gods and goddesses which they have chosen to invent according to their own opinion; and let them discover, if they can, some further good which could be bestowed on any man possessing virtue and possessing felicity. What doctrine would he need to seek from Mercury or Minerva, since Virtue would already include everything in herself? Indeed, virtue was described by the men of old as the art of living well and rightly. Hence, they considered that it was from the Greek word *areté*, which means ‘virtue’, that the Latin-speaking peoples derived the word ‘art’. Even if virtue can only come to the clever, however, what need was there of the god called Father Catius to make men *catos*, that is, shrewd, when Felicity could confer this gift herself?

It is indeed a matter of felicity to be born clever. Hence, although the goddess Felicity could not be worshipped by someone as yet unborn and so, being thus solicited, bestow this favour on him, she might at least answer the prayers of parents who worshipped her that clever children should be born to them. What need was there for women in labour to call upon Lucina when, with Felicity present, they would have not only an easy delivery, but also good children? Why was it necessary to commend the newly born to the goddess Ops, or wailing infants to the god Vaticanus? Or those in their cradles to the goddess Cunina? Or sucklings to the goddess Rumina? Or those who could stand up to the God Statilius? Or those who could walk towards someone [*adeuntes*] to the goddess

Adeona? Or those who could walk away [*abeuntes*] to Abeona? Or to the goddess Mens, that they might have good minds? To the god Volumnus and the goddess Volumna, that they might desire good things? To the gods of wedlock, that they might marry well? To the gods of the field, and especially to the goddess Frutesca, that they might receive the most abundant fruits? To Mars and Bellona, that they might fight well? To the goddess Victory, that they might conquer? To the god Honos, that they might be honoured? To the goddess Pecunia, that they might have plenty of money [*pecunia*]? To the god Aesculanus and his son Argentinus, that they might have bronze and silver money? – for the Romans made Aesculanus the father of Argentinus because bronze money was brought into use first, and silver later. (I wonder at it that Argentinus did not then beget an Aurinus, for gold coin also has followed. And if the Romans had had a god called Aurinus, they would have placed him above his father Argentinus and his grandfather Aesculanus, just as they put Jupiter above Saturn.)

Why, then, was it necessary to worship and invoke such a swarm of gods for the sake of these goods either of soul or body or outward appearance? (I have not mentioned all of them; but neither could their own worshippers divide up all human goods minutely and individually, and provide separate and individual gods for each of them.) For the one goddess Felicity could very easily bestow all of these goods together, making it unnecessary to seek out others either to obtain blessings or to avert evils. Why need the goddess Fessona be invoked on behalf of the weary [*fessi*]? Or the goddess Pellonia to repel [*pellere*] the enemy? Or a god of healing, either Apollo or Aesculapius – or both of them at once when the peril was great? Nor need the god Spiniensis be called upon to eradicate thorns [*spinae*] from the fields, nor the goddess Robigo, that mildew [*robigo*] might not come. For if Felicity alone were present and vigilant, either no evils could arise, or, if they did, they would be banished with the greatest of ease.

Finally, since we are here treating of the two goddesses Virtue and Felicity: if felicity is the reward of virtue, it is not a goddess but a gift of God. And if Felicity is a goddess, why may it not be said that she confers the gift of virtue also? – for the attainment of virtue is itself a great felicity.

**22 Of the knowledge of the worship due to the gods
which Varro rejoices in having bestowed on the
Romans**

What is it, therefore, that Varro boasts that he has bestowed as a great benefit upon his fellow citizens? He not only names the gods who ought to be worshipped by the Romans, but also describes the tasks which belong to each of them. For it is of no profit, he says, to know the name and appearance of some man who is a physician and not to know that he is a physician. By the same token, it is of no profit to know that Aesculapius is a god if you do not know that he helps the sick, and if you therefore do not know why you should pray to him. And Varro affirms this by way of another comparison, saying that no one is able not only to live well, but even to live at all, if he does not know who is a blacksmith, who a baker, who a plasterer, from whom he can seek what he needs, whom he may take for a helper, whom for a leader, whom for a teacher. In the same way, he asserts, no one can doubt that a knowledge of the gods is of benefit only if it includes a knowledge of what strength and skill and power each god has in each case. 'For then', he says, 'we shall be able to know what god we ought to call upon and invoke for each purpose, lest we should be like comic actors and ask water from Liber and wine from the Lymphs'. A great blessing, indeed!

But who would not thank this Varro if he could show true things, and if he could teach that the one true God, from Whom all good things come, ought to be worshipped by men?

**23 Of Felicity, whom the Romans, though they
venerate many gods, for a long time did not worship
with divine honours even though she would have
sufficed alone, in place of all the rest**

But – to return to our point – if the books and rites of the Romans are true, and Felicity is a goddess, why was she not chosen as the only one to be worshipped, since she could confer all blessings and create complete happiness? For who desires anything for any other reason than that he may be happy? Why, then, was it left to

Lucullus to establish a temple to so great a goddess at so late a date, after so many eminent Romans had omitted to do so? When Romulus himself desired to found a happy city, why did he not build a temple to Felicity before all others, and not supplicate the other gods for anything, since he would have lacked nothing if she were present? For he himself would not have become first a king, and then, as they suppose, a god, if this goddess had not been propitious to him. To what end, therefore, did he establish as gods for the Romans Janus, Jupiter, Mars, Picus, Faunus, Tiberinus, Hercules and all the rest? To what end did Titus Tatius add Saturn, Ops, Sol, Luna, Vulcan, Lux, and whomever else he added, including the goddess Cloacina, when Felicity was neglected? To what end did Numa add so many more gods and goddesses without her? — perhaps he could not see her in so great a crowd! And Hostilius certainly would not have introduced the new gods Fear and Dread to be propitiated if he had known and worshipped this goddess. For, had Felicity been present, Fear and Dread would not have retired propitiated: they would have fled defeated!

Why is it, then, that, even when the Roman empire was spreading far and wide, Felicity was still not worshipped? Is this, perhaps, why the empire was greater in size than in happiness? For how could there be true happiness where there was not true piety? Piety is the true worship of the true God: not the worship of as many false gods as there are demons. But even subsequently, when Felicity had now been received into the number of the gods, the great infelicity of the civil wars ensued. Was Felicity perhaps justly indignant that she was invited so late, and was invited rather to be insulted than honoured? For she was, after all, worshipped in company with Priapus and Cloacina and Fear and Dread and Fever and others: gods who were not worthy of worship, but sources of disgrace to their worshippers.

Finally, if it seemed good to worship so great a goddess in the company of so entirely unworthy a rabble, why, at least, was she not worshipped in a more becoming fashion than the others? For who can bear it that Felicity is placed neither among the *di consentes*²⁴ who are, they say, admitted into the council of Jupiter, nor

²⁴ The *di consentes* were the twelve superior gods whose statues stood in the forum: Juno, Vesta, Minerva, Ceres, Diana, Venus, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Neptune,

among the gods whom the Romans call 'select'?²⁵ A temple outstanding in the sublimity of its site and the nobility of its construction should have been made for her. Indeed, why not something better for her than was built even for Jupiter? For who if not Felicity gave royal power even to Jupiter? – if, that is, he was happy when he reigned. Felicity is indeed greater than royal power. For no one doubts that it is easy to find a man who might fear to be made a king, but no one is found who does not wish to be happy. If, then, the gods themselves were to be consulted by augury, or by whatever other means men think possible, and were to be asked whether they were willing to give precedence to Felicity, supposing that the place where a greater and more sublime temple was to be built for Felicity had already been occupied by the temples and altars of others: in this event, even Jupiter himself would give way, so that Felicity rather than he should occupy the very summit of the Capitoline hill. For no one would resist Felicity unless he wished to be unhappy, which cannot be.

It is entirely out of the question, then, that Jupiter, if he were to be consulted, would do what the three gods Mars, Terminus and Juventas did to him. For these would not by any means consent to give place to a greater god and king. As the written records of the Romans show, when Tarquin the king wished to build the Capitol and found that the place which seemed most worthy and appropriate was already occupied by other gods, he did not presume to do anything against their will. He believed, however, that they would willingly yield to so great a deity, who was also their prince. Thus, because there were so many of them where the Capitol was to be built, he asked them all by augury whether they were prepared to grant the place to Jupiter. All were willing to give precedence to him apart from those whom I have named: Mars, Terminus and Juventas. It was for this reason that the Capitol was constructed in such a way that these three might also be within it, but with the signs of their presence so well concealed that even the most learned men could hardly know this.²⁶

Vulcan and Apollo (Varro, *De ling. Lat.*, 8,70f; Ennius, quoted in Apuleius, *De deo Socr.*, 2).

²⁵ Cf. Bk VII,2.

²⁶ Augustine (no doubt writing from memory) here conflates and embellishes several different versions of the same story. Cf. Ovid, *Fast.*, 2,667ff; Livy, 1,55; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 3,69.

By no means, then, would Jupiter have slighted Felicity as he himself was slighted by Terminus, Mars and Juventas. But even these three, who would not yield to Jupiter, would surely have yielded to the Felicity who made Jupiter their king. Or if they would not yield, this would be not out of contempt for her, but because they chose rather to be hidden in the house of Felicity than to be apart from her in their own places.

If, therefore, the goddess Felicity had been established in the most ample and lofty abode, the citizens would have known whence help should be sought for every good purpose. And so, by the persuasion of nature herself, they would have abandoned the superfluous multitude of other gods and worshipped and supplicated Felicity alone. Her temple alone would have been frequented by the citizens who wished to be happy; and, since none of them would not so wish, felicity, formerly sought from all the gods, would now be sought only from Felicity herself. For who wishes to obtain anything from any god apart from felicity or what he supposes will conduce to felicity? And if Felicity has it in her power to be with whatever man she pleases – as she does, if she is a goddess – then is it not folly to petition some other god for what you can obtain by asking her for it herself?

The Romans, therefore, should have honoured this goddess above all the gods by indeed furnishing her with a worthier abode. For, as we read in their own authors, the ancient Romans worshipped Summanus – although I do not know who he is²⁷ – to whom they attributed thunderbolts at night, rather than Jupiter, to whom belonged thunderbolts by day. But, after a famous and lofty temple was built for Jupiter, the multitude turned to him so completely, because of the nobility of the building, that hardly any man can now be found who remembers even reading the name of Summanus, which is no longer to be heard.

If Felicity is not a goddess, however, but – and this is the truth – a gift of God, then let men seek that God Who is truly able to give them felicity. Let them relinquish the poisonous multitude of false gods to which the vain multitude of stupid men resort: men who, because they make the gifts of God into gods themselves, offend Him Whose gifts they are by the obstinacy of their proud will. For

²⁷ Cf. Ovid, *Fast.*, 2,731f.

a man cannot escape infelicity if he worships Felicity as a goddess and forsakes the God who is the giver of felicity, just as he cannot escape hunger if he licks a picture of a loaf instead of asking for a real one from someone who has it.

24 By what arguments the pagans defend the fact
that they worship the gifts of God as though they
were gods

But I should like to consider the arguments of our adversaries. Are we to believe, they ask, that our ancestors were so foolish that they did not know that these things are divine gifts, and not gods? They knew, however, that such things are not granted to anyone except by some god who freely bestows them. Thus, they called the gods whose names they did not know by the names of the things that they judged to be given by them.

Sometimes, they slightly modified the name for that purpose. For instance, from war they named Bellona, not *Bellum*; from cradles, Cunina, not *Cuna*; from crops, Segetia, not *Seges*; from fruits, Pomona, not *Pomum*; and from oxen Bubona, not *Bos*. Sometimes, on the other hand, they made no change in the word, and used the names of the things themselves. Thus, the goddess who gives money is called Pecunia, although money itself, of course, is not thought to be a goddess. So too Virtus, who gives virtue; Honos, who gives honour; Concordia, who gives concord; and Victoria, who gives victory. Thus, they say, when Felicity is said to be a goddess, what is meant is not the thing itself, but the divine being by whom felicity is bestowed.

25 Of the worship of the one God Who, though His
name is unknown, is nonetheless known to be the
giver of felicity

Now that we have had this account presented to us, then, we shall, perhaps, be more easily able to persuade as we wish those whose hearts are not already too greatly hardened. For human infirmity has now clearly realised that felicity cannot be given except by some god. This much was seen by those men who worshipped so many

gods, including Jupiter himself, their king. But, because they did not know the name of Him by Whom felicity is given, they chose to call the deity who gave it by the name of the gift. This, then, sufficiently shows them to have thought that felicity cannot be given even by Jupiter himself, whom they worshipped already, but only by that divine being whom they deemed worthy of worship under the very name of Felicity. Thus, by this argument I prove that they believed felicity to be given by some God whom they did not know. Let that God be sought, therefore; let Him be worshipped, and it is enough. Let the rabble of innumerable demons be renounced, and let this God be found insufficient by those for whom His gift is insufficient. Let God, the giver of felicity, I say, be not enough to worship for him to whom felicity itself is not enough to receive. But let him for whom felicity is enough – and no man has anything more to wish for – serve the one God, the giver of felicity.

He is not the one whom they call Jupiter, however. For if they acknowledged Jupiter to be the giver of felicity, they would not seek, under the name Felicity itself, another god or goddess by whom felicity might be given. Nor would they have supposed that Jupiter was to be worshipped by means of such great insults; for he is said to be the seducer of other men's wives and the shameless lover and ravisher of a beautiful boy.

26 Of the theatrical displays which the gods exacted from their worshippers

But Cicero says: 'Homer invented these stories and transferred things human to the gods. I would rather transfer things divine to us.'²⁸ The poet, by inventing such crimes of the gods, justly displeased this judicious man. Why, then, are the theatrical displays in which these crimes are portrayed, sung and enacted, exhibited in honour of the gods and reckoned, by the most learned men, to be among things divine? Cicero should here protest not against the fictions of the poets, but against the institutions of our forebears. But would not they exclaim in reply: 'What have we done? It was the gods themselves who commanded that these performances be exhibited in their honour. They fiercely demanded them; they

²⁸ *Tusc. disp.*, 1,26,65.

threatened us with destruction if they were not performed; they most severely avenged any neglect, and they showed themselves to be pleased when such neglect was made good.'

Among the virtuous and wonderful deeds of the gods is recorded the following. Titus Latinus, a Roman farmer and the head of a family, was told in a dream that he should announce to the Senate that the Roman games must be repeated. This was because, on the first day of the games, it had been ordered that a certain criminal was to be led to his execution in the sight of the people. This grim spectacle had displeased the gods, who were, of course, seeking amusement from the games. But when he who had been warned in the dream did not dare to obey the command on the following day, the same command was repeated with greater severity during the next night. Then, because he still did not act, he lost his son. On the third night, the man was told that a still greater punishment was in store for him if he did not act; and when, even then, he did not dare to do so, he fell prey to a bitter and loathsome disease. Then, however, on the advice of his friends, he reported the affair to the magistrates. He was borne into the Senate on a litter and, having told his dream, recovered his health forthwith, and went away whole on his own feet. Astonished by so great a miracle, the Senate voted to repeat the games at four times the original cost.

Who of sound mind does not see that, in this case, in submission to the will of malignant demons from whose dominion nothing releases us save the grace of God through Jesus Christ, men were compelled by force to exhibit to the gods plays which right judgment should have declared shameful? In these plays, indeed, the crimes of the gods are celebrated in poetic form; yet the games were repeated by order of the Senate because the divine beings required it. In these games, the vilest actors would sing and act out the part of Jupiter as the corruptor of modesty – and thus please him! If that was a fiction, he should have been angered; but if he was pleased by the portrayal of his crimes even though fictitious, who but a devil was served when he was worshipped? Could the Roman empire have been founded, extended and preserved as it was by such a god, who is more abject than any Roman man whatsoever who was displeased by such spectacles? Could he give felicity, who was so infelicitously worshipped, and who was still more infelicitously angered if he was not so worshipped?

27 Of the three kinds of gods discussed by the pontiff Scaevola

It is recorded in our written sources that the most learned pontiff Scaevola maintained that we are taught to believe in gods of three kinds.²⁹ We are taught to believe in one kind by the poets, in another by the philosophers, and in a third by the city's rulers. He says that gods of the first kind are of no account, since many ignoble tales have been invented about them. Gods of the second kind are of no value to states because certain superfluous doctrines are associated with them, and also because there are some doctrines that it is harmful for the people to know. The superfluous doctrines are of no great significance for, as those learned in the law are apt to say, 'Superfluous things do no harm.'³⁰ What, however, are those doctrines which are harmful when placed before the multitude? Such statements, he says, as the following: 'That Hercules, Aesculapius, Castor and Pollux are not gods; for it is asserted by the learned that these were men who had passed on from the human state.'³¹ What else? 'That cities do not possess the true images of the gods, because the true God has neither sex nor age nor determinate bodily parts.' The pontiff does not wish the people to know these things precisely because he does not think that such things are false. He considers it expedient, therefore, that cities should be deceived in matters of religion; nor does Varro himself hesitate to say the same thing in his books dealing with things divine. What a wonderful religion! He who is weak may go to it for refuge when he is in need of deliverance; yet, when he seeks the truth by which he may be delivered, it is pronounced expedient for him to be cheated!

Moreover, in these same books Scaevola does not by any means pass over in silence his reasons for rejecting the gods of the poets: namely, that the poets give so distorted an account of the gods that they cannot be compared even with good men. For they represent one god as stealing, another as committing adultery, or others again as saying or doing something ignoble or foolish. They say that three goddesses competed with one another for the prize of beauty, and that the two who were beaten by Venus overthrew Troy. They say

²⁹ The 'written sources' here referred to are no doubt the lost books of Varro.

³⁰ Cf. *De Civitate Dei*, ed. C. Weyman (n.p., 1924), 6, 23, 17.

³¹ Cf. Bk vi, 7; vii, 27.

that Jupiter turned himself into a bull or a swan in order to enjoy some female; that a goddess married a man; that Saturn ate his children. In short, no wonders and no vices, however far removed from the nature of the gods, can be imagined which are not found in the tales of the poets.

O Pontifex Maximus Scaevola, abolish the games if you can! Teach the people that they should not hold festivals in honour of the immortal gods. Abolish those festivals in which the people take delight in admiring the crimes of the gods and find pleasure in imitating as many of them as possible. And if the people answer you by saying, 'But you, O Pontiff, have required these things of us' – then ask the gods themselves, at whose instigation you commanded these things, not to require such deeds to be exhibited in their honour. After all, if the deeds are wicked, and therefore in no way to be believed of the majesty of the gods, so much the greater is the injury done to the gods to whom they are falsely ascribed with impunity.

But the gods do not hear you: they are demons who teach depravity and rejoice in vileness. Not only do they not consider it an injury if these things are falsely ascribed to them; on the contrary, it is an injury which they cannot endure if these things are not enacted at their solemn festivals. And the case is made even worse if you appeal to Jupiter against them: for his crimes are the ones most frequently portrayed in the theatrical displays! Also, if you give the name Jupiter to the god who rules and governs all the world, are you not offering him the greatest insult if you suppose that he is to be worshipped in company with such gods, and if you make him their king?

28 Whether the worship of the gods helped the Romans in obtaining and extending their empire

When the gods take pleasure in honours of this kind, then, they are, in fact, accused by them. For it is a greater crime for them to rejoice in having such things said of them falsely than it would be if they were true. But such gods certainly could not by any means have increased and preserved the Roman empire. For if they had power to confer so great a gift at all, they would have given it to the Greeks, who worshipped them with more honour and dignity

in divine things of this kind: that is, in theatrical displays. For the Greeks did not exempt themselves from the attacks of the poets by whom they saw the gods lashed, but gave them licence to treat any man they pleased ill. And they did not consider the actors themselves to be base, but held them worthy even of outstanding honours.

Just as the Romans could have gold money without worshipping a god called Aurinus, then, and just as they could have had silver and bronze money without the worship of Argentinus and his father Aesculanus, and so on with all the rest, which it would be tedious to repeat in detail; so it is also with their empire. They could not by any means have obtained it against the will of the true God, but if they had ignored or despised the multitude of false gods and acknowledged and worshipped the One with sincere faith and virtue, they would have had a better kingdom here, whatever its extent. Also, whether they had a kingdom here or not, they would have received an eternal kingdom hereafter.

29 Of the falseness of the augury by which the strength and stability of the Roman empire was believed to have been indicated

What is the meaning of the story to which I referred a little while ago: the story of Mars and Terminus and Juventas, who would not give place even to Jupiter, the king of the gods? The Romans regarded this as an excellent augury. For in this way, they say, it was indicated that the race of Mars – that is, the Roman race – would surrender the place which they held to no one; that, thanks to the god Terminus, no one would disrupt the Roman frontiers; and that, thanks to the goddess Juventas, Roman youth would yield to no one. But let them now consider how they can also believe that Jupiter is the king of their gods and the giver of their empire, when this augury set him down as an adversary to whom it would be a splendid thing for other gods not to yield. If the augury were true, then the gods who would not yield to Jupiter surely would not yield to Christ either; and there would be no need for our adversaries to fear having to admit that they had. In truth, however, those gods have already yielded to Christ. Indeed, they have been able to do so without damage to the frontiers of the empire. They have surren-

dered their sacred places and, especially, their place in the hearts of those who believed in them.

Moreover, before Christ had come in the flesh, and before these things that we have cited from the Romans' books were written, yet after that augury was made under Tarquin the king, the Roman army was on several occasions scattered or put to flight. Thus, the auspice inferred from the fact that Juventas did not give place to Jupiter was shown to be false. The nation of Mars was beaten down in the very city of Rome by the invading and victorious Gauls. Also, the frontiers of the empire were reduced to a narrow compass when many cities defected to Hannibal. The supposed excellence of the auspice came to nothing, therefore, and Jupiter was shown to have been defied not by gods, but by demons. It is one thing not to yield; to regain what has been yielded is another. Again, it also came to pass that the eastern frontiers of the Roman empire were altered by the free act of the emperor Hadrian. For he yielded up to the ruler of the Persians the three noble provinces of Armenia, Mesopotamia and Assyria. The god Terminus, then, who, they say, is the protector of Rome's frontiers and who, in a most favourable auspice, had not given place to Jupiter, seems to have feared Hadrian, a king of men, more than he feared the king of the gods! To be sure, the provinces which I have just named were recovered at a later time. But Terminus once more gave ground, almost within my own recollection, when Julian, devoted as he was to the oracles of the gods, showed foolhardy courage in ordering the ships in which his provisions were transported to be burnt.³² The army was thus left destitute, and he himself was slain by the enemy shortly afterwards. The troops, shocked by the death of their commander, were reduced to desperate straits when the enemy rushed upon them from every side. So grievous was their plight that none would have escaped had it not been for the articles of peace which established the boundaries of the empire where they remain to this day. This was not, it is true, so great a concession as that to which Hadrian had agreed; but there was a certain degree of loss nonetheless.

It was an empty augury, therefore, when the god Terminus did not yield to Jupiter. For he yielded to the will of Hadrian, and he yielded also to the temerity of Julian and the desperate plight of

³² Cf. Bk V, 21; Ammianus Marcellinus 24, 7, 4.

Jovian. The more intelligent and eminent of the Romans saw all this, but they were little able to oppose the customs of a city in thrall to the rites of demons. For they themselves, even though they knew these things to be vain, still held that religious worship should be paid, not to the God to Whom it is due, but to the order of nature established under the rule and government of that one and true God. Thus, they were, as the apostle says, 'serving the creature more than the Creator, Who is blessed for ever'.³³ The aid of this true God was necessary to send men of true holiness and godliness to die for the true religion in order to abolish the false from among the living.

30 What manner of things even those who worship the gods of the nations have confessed to believing of them

Cicero the augur laughs at auguries and mocks men for organising the courses of their lives according to the voices of the raven and the crow.³⁴ (Although, since he is an Academic, who maintains that everything is uncertain, it is surely not appropriate for him to be given any authority in such matters!) In the second book of his *De natura deorum*, he introduces as a disputant Quintus Lucilius Balbus. Having shown that superstitions arise out of the nature of things or from physical and philosophical origins, Balbus declares himself offended at the setting up of images and by fabulous tales. He speaks as follows:

Do you not see, then, that the reason may be diverted by these things from good and useful physical investigations to imaginary and fictitious gods? This has given rise to false opinions and disturbing errors, and to superstitions worthy only of old women. The forms of the gods are known to us, as are their ages, raiment and adornments, and their genealogies, marriages and kinships. Everything about them has been debased into a semblance of human weakness. For they are introduced as suffering perturbation of mind: we have received accounts of the lusts, griefs and angers of the gods. Nor, indeed, according to

³³ Rom. 1,25.

³⁴ Cf. Cicero, *De divin.*, 2,24.

the stories, are the gods exempt from wars and conflicts; and this is not only true when, as in Homer, certain gods on either side have defended two opposing armies. For they have even waged wars on their own account, as with the Titans or the Giants. It is quite absurd either to say or to believe these things: they are full of vanity and supremely frivolous.³⁵

Behold, then, what is confessed even by those who defend the gods of the nations! Next, he says that, whereas all these things belong to superstition, those things which he purports to teach according to Stoic doctrine belong to religion. 'For not only the philosophers', he says, 'but our ancestors also have made a distinction between superstition and religion. For those', he adds, 'who spent whole days praying and offering sacrifices so that their children might outlive them [*superstites essent*] were called superstitious'. Who does not understand that, because he is afraid of showing disrespect for the customs of the city, he is trying to praise the religion of the ancestors while at the same time disentangling that religion from superstition? He can find no way of doing so, however. For if those who spent whole days in prayer and sacrifice were called superstitious by the ancestors, why should the ancestors themselves not be so called? For was it not they who did what Balbus himself deplores when they set up images of gods of different ages, and of gods differently dressed, with genealogies, marriages and kinships? When he condemns the setting up of such images as superstitious, therefore, he implicates the ancestors themselves in that fault; for it was they who set them up and worshipped them. Indeed, he implicates himself also. For no matter how eloquently he may strive to dissociate himself from them and be free, he is nonetheless himself under the necessity of venerating these images: he would not dare to whisper, in an address to the popular assembly, what in this treatise he so eloquently declares.

Let us Christians therefore give thanks to the Lord our God: not to heaven or earth, as Cicero argues, but to Him Who made heaven and earth. For He, through the supreme humility of Christ, through the preaching of the apostles, and through the faith of the martyrs who have died for the truth and now live with the Truth, has cast down the superstitions which the babbler Balbus only half-heartedly

³⁵ *De nat. deor.*, 2,28,70.

reprehends. He has done this by the free service of His people, not only in the hearts of the godly, but even in the temples of the superstitious.

31 Of the opinions of Varro, who, though he did not attain to a knowledge of the true God, nonetheless condemned popular belief and thought that only one god should be worshipped

What does Varro think? We are sorry to say that he places theatrical displays among things divine. This is not by his own judgment, however. For although, in many places, he, as a religious man, exhorts the people to worship the gods, does he not also admit that it is not by his own judgment that he follows the institutions established by the city of Rome? For he does not hesitate to confess that, if he were founding the city anew, he would consecrate the gods, and give them names, according to the principles of nature rather than following what is done now. As it is, however, finding himself among a people already ancient, he says that he must adhere to the names and titles of the gods traditionally received from antiquity, and that the purpose of his writing and study is to encourage people to worship the gods rather than to despise them. By these words, this most acute of men indicates clearly enough that he is not revealing all that he knows, for had he done so, he would have said much that would not only have been contemptible to himself, but would have seemed despicable even to the vulgar mob. Thus, it seems, he passes over such things in silence. I should be suspected of conjecture here had he himself, speaking of religious observances in another place, not plainly said that there are many truths which it is not useful for the common people to know, and, moreover, that there are many false views which it is expedient that the people should take to be true. This, he says, is why the Greeks held their initiations and mysteries in secret and behind closed doors. Here, beyond doubt, he discloses the whole policy of the supposedly wise men by whom cities and peoples are ruled. But malignant demons are wonderfully delighted by such deceit, for, by it, they possess deceivers and deceived alike, and nothing sets men free from their dominion save the grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The same most acute and learned author also says that, as it seems to him, the only men who have truly understood what God is are those who have believed Him to be the soul of the world, governing it by movement and reason. And it appears from this that, though Varro still did not hold the correct view (for the true God is not a soul, but the maker and establisher of the soul), yet, if he could have been free to resist the prejudice of custom, he would have confessed, and persuaded others, that only one God is to be worshipped, Who governs the world by movement and reason. The only question then remaining to be debated with him in this connexion would be that he had called Him a soul, and not rather the Creator of the soul.

He also says that, for more than 170 years, the Romans of old worshipped the gods without an image. 'If this practice had remained down to the present day', he says, 'the gods would have been worshipped with greater purity'. In support of this opinion, he cites, among other things, the testimony of the Jewish nation, and he does not hesitate to conclude his remarks by saying that those who first set up images for the people both diminished reverence and increased error in their cities. For he rightly thinks that gods in the shape of futile images might easily come to be despised. And when he says not 'transmitted error', but 'increased error', he clearly wishes it to be understood that error already existed even when there were no images. Hence, when he says that only those who believe God to be the governing soul of the world have perceived what He is; and when he deems that the rites of religion would have been observed more purely without images: who can fail to see how close he has come to the truth? For if he had been able to do anything against so ancient an error, he would certainly have held that one God should be worshipped, and also that He should be worshipped without an image. And, being found so close to the truth, he might perhaps have been easily persuaded of the mutability of the soul, and so have come to understand that the true God is that immutable nature which created the soul itself.

These things being so, then, it is clear that whenever such men as Varro have included passages in their writings which tend to show how ridiculous the many gods of Rome are, they have done this because compelled by the hidden will of God to confess the truth, and not because they are endeavouring to persuade others

that such passages are true. When, therefore, we cite these writings as evidence, we do so for the sake of confuting those who refuse to acknowledge how great and malign the power of the demons is: that power from which the sacrifice of such Holy Blood, shed once for us, and the gift of the Spirit imparted to us, can set us free.

**32 For what purpose the princes of the nations
wanted false religions to persist among the peoples
subject to them**

Varro also says that people are on the whole more inclined to follow the poets than the natural philosophers in their beliefs concerning the genealogies of the gods. Thus, he says, his ancestors – that is, the Romans of old – believed in both the sex and the generations of the gods, and were agreed as to their marriages. It certainly seems that this occurred for no other reason than that supposedly prudent and wise men made it their business to deceive the people in matters of religion. In doing this, they not only worshipped, but also imitated, the demons, whose greatest desire is to deceive. For just as the demons cannot possess any but those whom they have falsely deceived, so also men who are princes – not, indeed, righteous princes, but men like the demons – have persuaded the people in the name of religion to accept as true those things which they knew to be false: they have done this in order to bind men more tightly, as it were, in civil society, so that they might likewise possess them as subjects. For what weak and untutored men could escape the simultaneous falsehoods of both the rulers of the city and the demons?

**33 That the times of all kings and kingdoms have
been ordained by the judgment and power of God**

God, therefore, the author and giver of happiness, because He is the only true God, Himself gives earthly kingdoms to both good men and bad. He does not do this rashly, or as it were at random; for He is God, not Fortune. Rather, He acts in accordance with an order of things and times which is hidden from us, but entirely known to Him. And He does not serve this order as though subject

to it; rather, He Himself rules it as its Lord and disposes it as its Master. As for felicity, however, He gives it only to the good. There may be some servants who have it and others who do not; there may be some kings who have it and others who do not: but it will be complete only in that life where no one will be a servant. And so earthly kingdoms are given by Him to good and evil men alike, so that those who worship Him, who are still no more advanced in mind than little children, may not value these gifts from Him as though they were something great.

And this is the mystery of the Old Testament, in which the New was hidden: that, in the former, the gifts promised were earthly blessings, but, even then, spiritual men understood, although they did not declare it plainly, both the eternality which was signified by those temporal things, and the gifts of God in which true felicity is to be found.

34 Of the kingdom of the Jews, which was established by the one true God and preserved by Him for as long as they remained in the true religion

Earthly goods, then – those goods after which only those pant who cannot imagine anything better – rest in the power of the one God Himself, and not in that of the many false gods whom the Romans formerly believed worthy of worship. In order to show this, God multiplied His people in Egypt from being very few, and delivered them thence by marvellous signs. Nor did their women invoke Lucina when, in order to save their new-born children from persecution at the hands of the Egyptians, who had resolved to slay all infants, God intervened to ensure their miraculous multiplication and the incredible increase of the race. They were suckled without the goddess Rumina; they were cradled without Cunina; they took food and drink without Educa and Potina; they were educated without all the gods of childhood; they were married without the gods of marriage; they had marital intercourse without worshipping Priapus. Without any invocation of Neptunc the sea was divided for them to pass across, and then overwhelmed with its returning waves the enemies who pursued them. They did not consecrate any goddess Mannia when they received manna from Heaven; nor did they worship Nymphs and Lymphs when the rock was smitten and

poured forth water for the thirsty. They waged wars without the mad rites of Mars and Bellona, and, while, indeed, they did not conquer without victory, they nonetheless held victory to be not a goddess, but a gift of their God. They had crops without Segetia, oxen without Bubona, honey without Mellona, apples without Pomona – in short, they had everything for which the Romans supposed that they should beseech so great a swarm of false gods: and they received these things far more happily from the one true God.

And if they had not sinned against Him, seduced by impious curiosity as if by magic arts, falling away into the worship of strange gods and idols, and at last putting to death the Christ, they would have remained in the same kingdom which, even if it did not grow in extent, would have grown in happiness. And now that they are dispersed throughout almost all lands and nations, this is by the providence of the true God. It is so that, when the images, altars, groves and temples of false gods are everywhere overthrown and their sacrifices prohibited, it may be shown from the Jewish Scriptures how all this was prophesied long ago: lest perhaps, if read only in our Scriptures, such prophecies might be thought falsehoods invented by us.

What comes next, however, is to be seen in the following book; for we must here set a limit to the great length of this one.

Book v

Preface

It is clear, then, that felicity consists in the full attainment of all desirable things. It is not a goddess, however, but a gift of God. Therefore no god should be worshipped by men except one who is able to bestow felicity on them. Hence, if felicity itself were a goddess, we might fairly say that Felicity alone would be the proper object of worship. But only God can confer those blessings which can be received even by men who are not good, and who therefore do not have felicity. Now, therefore, let us consider why He willed that the Roman empire should be so great and so enduring. For we have already argued at length that the great number of false gods whom the Romans worshipped did not accomplish this, and we shall continue to say this wherever it seems appropriate to do so.

I That the cause of the Roman empire, and of all kingdoms, is not mere chance; nor does it consist in the position of the stars

According to the judgment or opinion of some, things happen by 'chance' when they have no cause, or no cause arising from a rational order, and by 'fate' when they come about not by the will of God or men, but as a result of a necessary sequence. The cause of the greatness of the Roman empire is therefore neither chance nor fate; for it is beyond doubt that human kingdoms are established by divine providence. If anyone attributes them to fate because he uses the term 'fate' to mean the will or power of God, let him keep to this judgment but correct his language. But why does he not say from the first what he will say later when someone asks him what he means by 'fate'? For when men hear this word as it is used in ordinary speech, they understand it to mean nothing other than the force exerted by the position of the stars when anyone is born or conceived. Some distinguish this from the will of God, while others affirm that it indeed depends upon His will.

Those, however, whose opinion it is that the stars determine what we do, or what goods we may have, or what evils we shall suffer,

independently of the will of God, must be refused a hearing by all: not only by those who hold to the true religion, but also by those who choose to be worshippers of gods of any kind, even false ones. For what does this opinion imply, if not that we need worship or petition no god whatsoever? Our argument is not, however, directed against persons who hold this view, but against those who, in defence of those beings whom they suppose to be gods, oppose the Christian religion.

As for those who argue that the position of the stars depends upon the will of God while, in turn, the stars in some sense decree what sort of man each shall be and what good or evil shall come his way: they do Heaven a great injustice if they believe that the Supreme Power has handed over to the stars the power to make whatever decrees they wish. For they suppose that it is decreed in heaven, as by some most exalted senate in its most splendid assembly, that crimes are to be committed of such a kind that, if any earthly city had decreed them, the whole human race would deem it worthy of destruction! Moreover, what scope is left to the judgment of God, Who is Lord of both stars and men, in relation to the deeds of men, if a celestial necessity is assigned to those deeds? Alternatively, if they say that the stars, though they have received a certain power from the supreme God, do not make decrees according to their own will, but simply fulfil His commands in imposing such necessities upon men: are we, then, to believe of God Himself precisely what it seemed unworthy that we should believe concerning the will of the stars?

It may, of course, be said that the stars only signify these things, but do not effect them, so that the position of the stars is a kind of communication foretelling, but not causing, the future. And men of no mean learning have indeed held this view. The astrologers do not, however, usually say that, for example, 'Mars in this position signifies a homicide.' Rather, they say 'causes a homicide'. Let us concede that this confusion may be due to no more than the fact that these persons do not speak as clearly they should, and do not emulate the philosophers' accuracy of speech when they announce those things which they think they find in the position of the stars. Even so, however, how is it that they have never been able to tell us why so great a degree of difference arises in the lives of twins: with respect to their actions, what happens to them, their pro-

fessions, trades, achievements and, indeed, all the other things pertaining to human life, and even to their deaths? For it is often true, with regard to these things, that many complete strangers resemble them more closely than they resemble each other, even though, at their birth, the twins were separated by a very small interval of time, and, at their conception, begotten in a single moment by the one act of intercourse.

2 Of similarity and dissimilarity in the health of twins

Cicero¹ says that the most eminent physician Hippocrates left a written account of certain brothers who fell ill at the same time. Their sickness grew worse at the same time, and then better; and so he suspected that they were twins. Posidonius the Stoic, who was much given to astrology,² used to explain these facts by saying that the brothers were born and conceived under the same constellation. Thus, what the physician believed to be due to a similar physical constitution, the philosopher and astrologer attributed to the force and constitution of the stars at the time when they were conceived and born. In this case, the conjecture of the physician is much the more acceptable, and clearly the more credible. For the bodily condition of the parents at the time of intercourse might so influence the earliest beginning of the children at their conception that, following their initial period of growth in their mother's body, they would be born with the same constitution. Then, they would be nourished on the same food in the same house, where, as the art of medicine attests, the air, the location and the virtue of the water would all have great influence on the good or bad health of the body. They would also be accustomed to the same kinds of exercise; and so their bodily condition would be so similar that the same causes would indeed have the effect of bringing about the same diseases at the same time. But to wish to infer the cause of such simultaneous illnesses from the disposition of the heavens or the stars at the time of conception or birth: this is certainly a vagary, when so many persons of such greatly diverse nations, whose deeds

¹ This is probably a reference to the lost part of Cicero's *De fato*.

² Cf. Cicero, *De divm.*, 2,21,47.

and fortunes differ so very widely, may have been conceived and born at the same time in one region of the earth, lying under the same sky.

Again, we have known twins who not only had different occupations and migrated to different places, but who also suffered different kinds of illness. As to this, Hippocrates would furnish what seems to me to be the most straightforward explanation: that they might have come to differ from one another in health because of differences of nourishment and exercise – things which arise, not from the condition of the body, but from the deliberate choice of the mind. If, however, we ask Posidonius or anyone else who asserts that the stars have an influence on our fate, I should be surprised if he could find anything to say here, unless he should wish to mislead the minds of the ignorant on matters of which they know nothing. Exponents of astrology endeavour to show that an interval of time, albeit a very small one, does indeed separate the birth of twins, because of the minute division of the heavens where the notation of the hour is placed which they call a horoscope. We reply, however, that this is either not sufficiently great to account for the diversity in will, actions, morals and circumstances which is found in twins; or that it is too great to allow for the fact that twins are the same as each other in respect of their high or low estate. For the astrologers account for the greatest differences of this kind by citing nothing more than the hour at which someone was born. Hence, if one twin is born so soon after the other that the horoscope remains the same for each, then I suggest that everything in their lives should be the same; but twins of this kind can never be found. If, however, the horoscope is changed by the late arrival of the second twin, then I suggest that they must have different parents, which twins cannot have.

3 Of the argument from the potter's wheel that Nigidius the astrologer devised to solve the problem of twins

It is useless, therefore, to adduce the famous story of the potter's wheel which Nigidius is said to have given as his answer when taxed with this question of twins, and because of which he is called *Figulus*

['Potter'].³ He spun a potter's wheel with all the force he could, and then, as it was turning, quickly touched it twice with black ink, supposedly in one place. But when the motion stopped, it was found that the marks which he had made were no small distance apart on the edge of the wheel. 'Thus', he says, 'considering the rapidity with which the heavens turn, even if a second twin were born as quickly after the first as I made my second mark on the wheel, the difference would be very great in the vastness of heaven. Hence arise all the dissimilarities which may be found in the characters and circumstances of twins.'

This argument is more fragile than the pots made by the spinning of that wheel! For if a difference in the heavens which cannot be perceived in the constellations is of a significance so great that one twin may display inherited characteristics that the other does not, how, in the case of persons who are not twins, can the astrologers venture, when they have examined their constellations, to make pronouncements arising from this mystery that no one can observe, and attribute them to the moment of birth? They may, of course, say that such pronouncements are possible when made in the case of those who are not twins because they relate to longer intervals of time, whereas such very small intervals as may occur between the birth of twins affect only very small matters about which astrologers are not customarily consulted. For who would consult them as to when he should sit down, when he should walk about, or when or what he should eat? How can they say this, however, when we can show that the characters, deeds and circumstances of twins do, in fact, exhibit so many and such great differences?

4 Of the twins Esau and Jacob, who were very different from one another in character and actions

To speak of notable cases, there were twin brothers born in the time of our forefathers, the one so soon after the other that the second was born grasping the heel of the first.⁴ So great was the difference in their lives and characters, so great was the disparity of

³ Cf. Cicero, *Epist. ad fam.*, 4,13; Suetonius, *Divus Augustus*, 94; Lucan, *Pharsal.*, 1,639.

⁴ Gen. 25,26; Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, 2,33.

their deeds, and so great the difference in their parents' love for them, that the very contrast between them made them enemies of one another. Does this divergence also mean that while one was walking the other would sit, and that the one would be asleep while the other was awake, and that while one spoke the other would be silent? Clearly not. But disparities of this kind may indeed be related to differences so minute that they cannot be recorded by those who write down the disposition of the stars under which each man is born, so that astrologers may be consulted about them. What, however, of the fact that one of the twins was led away into paid servitude, and the other was not a servant? Again, one was loved by his mother, and the other was not loved. One lost the honour which men then held in such great esteem, and the other obtained it. And what of their wives? What of their children? What of their property? How great was the difference! If, then, even these things depend upon the minute intervals of time which elapse between the birth of twins and are not attributed to the constellations at large, why do the astrologers mention things of the same kind when examining the constellations of others? If, on the other hand, they mention these things because they are related not to incomprehensibly small moments of time, but to periods of time which can be observed and recorded, what is the point of the story of the potter's wheel? Is it to throw men who have hearts of clay into a spin, so that the astrologers shall not be convicted by them of talking nonsense?

5 In what way the astrologers are convicted of professing a vain science

What, then, of those two brothers whose sickness appeared to grow worse and then better at the same time? From his medical examination of them, Hippocrates suspected that they were twins. Does not this case sufficiently refute those who wish to attribute to the stars that which in fact arises out of a similarity of bodily constitution? For, given that they clearly could not both have been born simultaneously, why did they both become ill in the same way and at the same time, and not the one first and the other next, according to the order in which they were born? For if the small difference in the time of their birth changed the horoscope and introduced a difference into everything else, why has the similarity which they

received from being conceived at the same time remained only in respect of their illness? Or if one's fate with regard to health depends upon conception whereas everything else is said to depend upon the time of birth, the astrologers ought not to derive any pronouncement concerning health from an inspection of the constellations at birth, unless the hour of conception is also given to them for inspection. If, however, they claim to foretell illnesses without inspecting the horoscope of conception because such illnesses are indicated by the moment of birth, how could they tell either of the twins when he would be ill from the horoscope of his birth, when the other also, who did not have the same horoscope of birth, must necessarily be ill at the same time?

Next, I ask the following question. If the difference of time between the birth of twins is so great that, as a result of it, the constellations become different for them, so that their horoscopes are also different, and so also are all the cardinal points to which is attributed such great power to determine different destinies – how could this come about, given that it is not possible for them to have been conceived at different times? Or, if two persons conceived at the same moment of time could have different fates by reason of their births, why should two persons who are not twins, but who were born at the same moment of time, not have different fates with respect to life and death? For if the single moment at which both twins were conceived did not prevent one from being born earlier and the other later, why, if two persons who are not twins are born at the same moment, does anything prevent the one from dying earlier and the other later? If conception at the same moment permits twins to have different fortunes in the womb, why does birth at the same moment not permit any two other persons also to have different fortunes on earth? Would that not abolish all the falsehoods of this art, or, rather, this foolishness? Why is it that persons conceived at one time, in one moment, under one and the same aspect of the heavens, have different fates which lead them to be born at different times, yet two persons born of two different mothers at the same moment of time, under one and the same aspect of the heavens, cannot have different fates which lead them by necessity to different ways of life and death?

Or do they not yet have fates when they are conceived, because they will not be able to have them unless they are born? What do

the astrologers mean, then, when they say that if the hour of conception is found, they can divine many things more accurately? Hence, not a few of them tell the story of the wise man who selected the hour at which to lie with his wife in order to beget an outstanding son. Finally, from this belief also comes the reply of Posidonius, the great astrologer, and a philosopher also, concerning the twins who fell ill together: that this came about because they were born and conceived at the same time. He undoubtedly adds the mention of conception here lest anyone should say that, though it is entirely clear that they were conceived at the same time, the twins certainly could not have been born at the same time. For he did not wish to attribute their simultaneously suffering similar illnesses to the immediate cause of similar bodily constitutions, but, rather, to make their similarity of health depend on a connexion with the stars. If, therefore, conception has such great power to bring about equalities of fate, these fates should not have been altered by birth. Or, if the fates of twins are altered because they are born at different times, why should we not rather understand that they had been altered already, in order that they might be born at different times? Can it be that the will of the living does not change the fates which are established at birth, yet the order of birth can change the fates established at conception?

6 Of twins of different sexes

Even in the very conception of twins, however, where both are certainly conceived at the same moment of time, how does it come about, if the same constellation determines the fate of both, that one may be conceived as male and the other as female? I know twins of different sexes, both of whom are alive, and both of whom are in the prime of life. Although their bodily appearance is as similar as it can be in two persons of different sex, they are entirely unlike in the direction and purpose of their lives. In what they do, of course, there must be a difference between the man and the woman. He serves on the staff of a count and is almost always away from his home. She, however, does not leave her native soil and her own estate. Moreover (and this is something more incredible, if you believe that fate is fixed by the stars, but not strange if you consider the will of men and the gifts of God), he is married, while she is a

consecrated virgin. He has fathered a number of children, but she has never married.

But is not the power of the horoscope very great? I have already said enough to show that it is nothing of the kind. Whatever the truth of the matter, however, our adversaries say that the horoscope is effective at the moment of birth. Why not, then, at the moment of conception also? For here, clearly, there is but one act of intercourse, and so great is the force of nature that, when a woman has conceived, she is thereafter entirely unable to conceive again. Hence, twins must necessarily be conceived at the same moment. Or will our adversaries perhaps say that one of the twins was changed into a male, or into a female, while they were being born, because at birth they were under different horoscopes?

It is not wholly absurd to say that the stars have a certain influence in bringing about differences of a merely corporeal kind. For example, we see that the seasons of the year change with the approach and receding of the sun, and that certain kinds of things grow and shrink with the waxing and waning of the moon, such as sea-urchins and oysters and the wondrous tides of the ocean. The choices of the will, however, are not subject to the position of the stars. Accordingly, when the astrologers endeavour to link our actions to the stars, we are prompted to ask why their reasoning is not consistent even in relation to corporeal matters. For what pertains more closely to a body than its sex? Yet twins of different sexes can be conceived under the same position of the stars. Hence, what greater folly can be affirmed or believed than that the position of the stars, exactly the same for both of them at the moment of conception, could not cause the sister not to have a different sex from that of the brother with whom she shared the same constellation, yet that the position of the stars at the hour of their birth could cause her to differ from him so widely in respect of her holy virginity?

7 Of the choice of a day for marriage or for planting or sowing in the field

Moreover, who could accept that men create new fates for themselves by their choice of days on which to act? The man of whom I spoke a little while ago, for instance, was not, it seems, born to

have an outstanding son, but, rather, to beget a contemptible one; and so, being a wise man, he chose the hour at which to have intercourse with his wife. He therefore created a fate which he did not have before, and, as a result of his act, there arose a fate which was not destined at his birth. What amazing folly! A day is chosen for taking a wife. The reason for this, I believe, is that unless the day is chosen, the marriage may fall on an unlucky day, and so be an unhappy one. But where, then, is the destiny already decreed for the man by the stars when he was born? Or can a man change that which is already ordained for him by choosing a day? In which case, cannot another power again change the destiny which he has established by his choice of day?

Again, if it is only men who are subject to the constellations, and not everything that lies under heaven, why do men choose certain days as propitious for the planting of vines or trees or corn, and other days for the taming of beasts, or for letting in the males by whom the herds of mares and cows are to be made pregnant, and for other such things? Men suppose that the choice of days is important in these matters because they believe that the position of the stars, as it changes according to the different moments of time, has dominion over all earthly bodies and living things. In this case, then, let them consider what innumerable things are born or arise or begin at a particular point of time, yet have ends so different as to persuade any child that the observations of the astrologers are laughable. For who is such a fool as to venture to say that all trees, all herbs, all beasts, serpents, birds, fish and worms have each a different moment of birth? Yet men customarily do bring to the astrologers, to test their skill, the horoscopes of dumb animals which they have discovered by diligently observing their birth at home. And they praise those astrologers above all others who, having inspected the constellations, pronounce that it is not a man, but an animal, that has been born. They even dare to say what kind of animal it is: whether it is suitable to give wool, or to be ridden, or for ploughing, or for guarding the house. They are even tested by questions about the fates of dogs, and their answers are greeted with great shouts of admiration.

Some are foolish enough to believe that, when a man is born, the birth of all other creatures under the same region of the heavens is delayed, so that not even a fly is born at the same time as he. For

if they admit the fly, then the process of reasoning will proceed step by step and lead them in small degrees from flies up to camels and elephants. Nor are they willing to notice this: that, when a day has been chosen for the sowing of a field, many seeds come onto the ground at the same time, germinate at the same time, and, as the crop springs up, become green blades, mature, and ripen. Of the ears of this crop, however, all of which are, so to speak, equal to one another in age and germination, some are destroyed by mildew, others are stripped by birds, and others are plucked by men. How, then, will they say that all these had their different constellations, when they see them coming to such diverse ends? Or will they now abandon the practice of choosing days for their various activities, and deny that such things are subject to the decree of heaven? Will they make only men subject to the stars: men, to whom, alone on earth, God has given free will?

Taking all these things into account, it is not unreasonable to believe that, when the astrologers do give very many wonderful answers, this is to be attributed to the hidden prompting of spirits far from good, whose care it is to sow and establish in the minds of men these false and noxious opinions concerning the influence of the stars on our fate. The astrologers' success is not due to the art of observing and studying horoscopes, for there is no such art.

8 Of those who use the term 'fate' to mean not the position of the stars, but a chain of causes which depends upon the will of God

There are those who use the term 'fate' to mean not the position of the stars as it is when any creature is conceived or born or begins, but the whole chain and series of causes according to which everything that happens happens. There is no need to devote great labour and effort to a merely verbal controversy with such persons. For they attribute this order and chain of causes to the will and power of the most high God: to the God Who is most excellently and truly believed to know all things before they come to pass, and to leave nothing unordained – the God from Whom are all powers, although not all the wills of men are from Him.

It is, then, chiefly the will of the most high God, Whose power stretches irresistibly forth through all things, that they call fate.

This is shown by the following words of, if I am not mistaken, Annæus Seneca: 'Lead, O Father most high, ruler of the lofty heavens, wherever Thou wilt, and I will hearken at once. Here am I, eager; but if I should refuse, still shall I follow groaning: basely shall I undergo what I might have done as a good man. The willing soul is led by fate; but it drags the unwilling.'⁵ It is perfectly evident that, in this last sentence, what he calls 'fate' is that which he had previously referred to as the will of the 'Father most high', which, he says, he is ready to obey: to be led willingly and not dragged unwillingly, for 'The willing soul is led by fate; but it drags the unwilling.'

The following lines of Homer which Cicero has translated into Latin also support this opinion: 'Such are the hearts of men, like the light which Father Jupiter himself pours forth over the fruitful earth.'⁶ Not that the opinion of a poet would have any authority in this question. Cicero, however, says that the Stoics were inclined to borrow these lines from Homer when asserting the power of fate. Thus, we are here concerned not with the opinion of the poet, but with that of the philosophers who, when they bring these lines into their discussion, most plainly declare their understanding of the nature of fate. They call it Jupiter, whom they believe to be the supreme god, and they say that the whole chain of destiny hangs from him.

9 Of the foreknowledge of God and the free will of man, against the definition of Cicero

In his attempt to refute the Stoics, Cicero considers himself helpless against them unless he can dispose of divination. He endeavours to do this by denying that there is any knowledge of the future, and he contends with all his might that there is no such knowledge in either man or god, and no way of foretelling events. Thus, he both denies the foreknowledge of God, and, using vain arguments even where the truth is clearer than day, strives to overthrow all prophecy.

⁵ Seneca, *Epist.* 107, paraphrasing the words of Cleanthes given in the original Greek by Epictetus at *Ench.* 77.

⁶ *Od.*, 18, 136f. The translation referred to was probably contained in the lost part of *De fato*.

He first opposes himself to certain oracles which are very easy to refute; although he is not particularly convincing against these.⁷ When it comes to refuting the conjectures of the astrologers, however, his argument triumphs; but only because these conjectures are really such that they destroy and refute each other. Nonetheless, we can tolerate much more readily those who hold that fate is embodied in the stars than we can one who takes away all foreknowledge of things to come. For it is the most patent madness to confess that God exists yet at the same time to deny his prescience of future events. Since Cicero saw this for himself, he even ventured to say something similar to what we find written in the Scriptures: 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.'⁸ He did not do this in his own person, however, for he knew how hateful and offensive such an opinion would be found. Rather, in his book *De natura deorum*, he makes Cotta argue against the Stoics on this point, and he chooses to give his own opinion in favour of Lucilius Balbus, to whom he had assigned the task of defending the Stoic position, rather than in favour of Cotta, who had contended that there is no divine being.⁹ In his book *De divinatione*, however, Cicero in his own person most plainly opposes the belief in foreknowledge of things to come. But he does this, it seems, in order to avoid admitting the existence of fate and so losing freedom of the will. For he thinks that, if he concedes that there can be foreknowledge of future events, he will then find himself quite unable to deny that the existence of fate follows as a necessary consequence.

But whatever may be the course taken by these most tortuous debates and disputes of the philosophers, we, in order that we may fully confess the most high and true God, do also confess His will, supreme power, and foreknowledge. Neither let us fear that what we do by free will is not done by free will because He Whose foreknowledge cannot fail foreknew that we would do it. It was this that Cicero feared, and so he opposed foreknowledge. So did the Stoics; which is why they said that not everything happens by necessity, although they argued that everything is brought about by fate.¹⁰

⁷ *De divin.*, 2,56.

⁸ Psalm 14,1.

⁹ *De nat. deor.*, 3.

¹⁰ Cf. *De fato*, 18,41.

What is it, therefore, that Cicero feared so greatly in the foreknowledge of things to come that he strove to overthrow it by his abominable argument? Clearly, that if all future events are known in advance, they will come about in the order in which their occurrence was foreknown; and, if they are to come about in this order, then there is a certain order of things foreknown by God; and if a certain order of things, then a certain order of causes, for nothing can come about which is not preceded by some efficient cause. If, however, there is a certain order of causes by which everything that happens happens, then, Cicero says, all things that happen happen by fate. If this is the case, however, then nothing is in our power and there is no free choice of the will; and if we concede that, he says, then the whole of human life is undermined. It is in vain that laws are given; it is in vain that reproaches, praises, denunciations and exhortations are used; nor is there any justice in the appointment of rewards for good men and punishments for bad.¹¹

In order to avoid these consequences, then, so unworthy and absurd and pernicious for human affairs, Cicero wishes to say that there is no foreknowledge of things to come. He restricts the mind of the religious man to a choice between two alternatives: either there is something which lies within the power of our own will, or there is foreknowledge of the future. He considers that these statements cannot both be true, and that to affirm one of them is to deny the other. Being a great and learned man, therefore, very fully and very wisely instructed in matters pertaining to human life, he chose out of these two alternatives the free choice of the will; and, in order to establish this, he denied foreknowledge of things to come. Thus, because he wished to make men free, he made them ungodly.

The religious mind, however, chooses both, confesses both, and confirms both by the faith of godliness. But how? asks Cicero. For if there is foreknowledge of things to come, a whole series of consequences must follow until the conclusion is reached that nothing lies within the power of our will. On the other hand, if anything does lie within the power of our will, by reversing the steps of the argument we are led to the conclusion that there is no foreknowledge of things to come. For all the steps are retraced in this way:

¹¹ *De fato*, 17,40.

if there is freedom of the will, then all things do not come about by fate; if all things do not come about by fate, then all things do not have a certain order of causes; if there is not a certain order of causes, neither is there a certain order of things foreknown by God, for things cannot come about unless they are preceded by efficient causes; and if there is not a certain order of things foreknown by God, then things do not all come to pass as He foreknew that they would; and if all things do not come to pass as He knew that they would, then, Cicero says, there is not in God foreknowledge of all future things.¹²

Now against these impudent, sacrilegious and ungodly arguments, we say both that God knows all things before they happen, and that we do by our own free will, and only by our own free will, whatever we know and feel to be done by us. We do not, however, say that all things come about by fate. On the contrary, we say that nothing comes about by fate. For we demonstrate that the word 'fate' as it is customarily used by those who speak of it in connexion with the position of the stars when someone is conceived or born is used emptily and avails nothing. Moreover, as to an order of causes in relation to which the will of God can do all things: we do not deny this, but neither do we bestow upon it the name of fate, unless, perhaps, we may understand 'fate' to be derived from *fari*, 'to speak'. For we cannot deny that it is written in the Sacred Scriptures: 'God hath spoken once; these two things have I heard, that power belongeth unto God. Also unto Thee, O God, belongeth mercy: for Thou wilt render unto every man according to his works.'¹³ Now the words 'God hath spoken once' are to be understood as meaning that He has spoken immovably, that is, immutably, just as He knows immutably all the things that will happen in the future and that He will Himself do. We might, then, use the word fate to mean 'spoken' in this sense, if the word were not already commonly understood in another sense, to which we would not wish the hearts of men to be inclined.

Moreover, even if a certain order of causes does exist in the mind of God, it does not follow that nothing is left to the free choice of our will. For our wills are themselves included in the order of causes

¹² *De fato*, 10, 20ff

¹³ Psalm 61, 1 ff.

which is certain to God and contained within His foreknowledge. For the wills of men are causes of the deeds of men, and so He Who has foreseen the causes of all things clearly cannot have been ignorant of our wills among those causes, since he foresaw them to be the causes of our deeds.

Moreover, when Cicero admits¹⁴ that nothing happens unless preceded by an efficient cause, this is in itself sufficient to rebut what he says in this matter. He says that nothing happens without a cause, but that not every cause is determined by fate, because there is also a fortuitous cause, a natural cause and a voluntary cause. But how does this help him? It is enough that he confesses that nothing happens unless preceded by a cause. As to those causes which he calls fortuitous, from which the word 'fortune' is also derived: we do not say that these do not exist, but that they are hidden, and we attribute them to the will of the true God, or to that of spirits of some kind or another. Furthermore, we do not by any means separate even natural causes from the will of Him Who is the Author and Creator of all nature. Finally, voluntary causes belong either to the will of God or to that of angels or men or certain animals (if, that is, we may apply the term 'will' to those movements of the non-rational animals by which they act according to their nature when they seek or shun something). When I speak of the wills of angels, I mean both the good angels, whom we call angels of God, and the wicked angels, whom we call angels of the devil, or also demons; and, by the same token, I mean both good and bad men.

From this discussion, then, we reach the conclusion that all things which come to pass have no efficient causes which are not voluntary causes: belonging, that is, to that Nature which is the Breath of life. (Air or wind may also be called 'breath'; but, because it is corporeal, it is not the Breath of life.) And the Breath of life Which quickens all things and is the Creator of every body and of every created spirit is God Himself, the wholly uncreated Spirit. In His supreme will lies the power which assists the good wills of created spirits, judges the wicked, and ordains all. To some He grants powers, and to others He does not. For just as He is the Creator of all natures, so is He the giver of all powers. Not of all

¹⁴ *De fato*, 10, 20f.

wills, however; for wicked wills certainly do not come from Him, because they are contrary to nature, which does come from Him. As to bodies, they are for the most part subject to wills: some to our wills (that is, to the wills of all living mortal creatures, but more to the wills of men than of beasts) and some to the will of angels. But all of them are above all subject to the will of God, to whom all wills also are subject, since they have no power except what He has granted.

The cause of things, therefore, which makes and is not made, is God. Other causes – created spirits, for example, and especially the rational ones – both make and are made. Material causes, however, which may rather be said to be made than to make, are not to be numbered among efficient causes, for they can do only what the wills of spirits do by means of them. How, then, does an order of causes which is certain to the foreknowledge of God entail that nothing should depend upon our wills, when our wills themselves play so great a part in that order of causes?

Cicero, then, takes issue with those who say that this order of causes is determined by fate, or, rather, who use the word 'fate' to mean the order itself. And we ourselves deprecate this view, especially because the word 'fate' is customarily used to mean something which is not in fact true. But as to his denial that the order of all causes is perfectly certain and perfectly known to the foreknowledge of God: we detest this view even more than the Stoics do. For he is either denying the existence of God – which, indeed, having assumed the person of another, he tried to do in the book *De natura deorum* – or, if he confesses that God exists but denies that He has knowledge of the future, he is, after all, saying nothing more than what the fool hath said in his heart: that there is no God. For one who does not know all future things surely is not God. Hence, our wills also have just so much power as God willed and foreknew that they should have. Therefore, whatever power they have they have most certainly; and whatever they are to do they will do most certainly: for He Whose foreknowledge cannot fail foreknew that they would have the power to do it and would do it. If, then, I thought it proper to apply the word 'fate' to anything at all, I should rather say that the fate of the weaker is the will of the stronger, who has the other in his power, than that the order of

causes which the Stoics call fate (in their own, but not the common, usage of the word) takes away the free choice of our will.

10 Whether necessity governs the wills of men

We need not, then, have any fear of that necessity which troubled the Stoics so greatly that they strove to make distinctions among the causes of things which would remove some things from necessity while leaving others subject to it. Among those things which they refused to regard as subject to necessity they placed our wills. They did this because, of course, our wills would not be free if they were made subject to necessity. But if the term 'necessity' is used to refer to that which is not in our power but which does what it can even when we are unwilling, such as the necessity of death, then it is clear that our wills, by which we live rightly or wrongly, are not under such necessity. For we do many things that we should certainly not do if we were unwilling. This is primarily true of the will itself. For if we will, then the will exists, and if we do not will, then it does not exist: for we should not will if we were unwilling.

Again, if the term 'necessity' is defined as that according to which we say that it is 'necessary' for something to be as it is or to happen as it does, I do not know why we should fear that this may take away our freedom of will. For we do not make the life of God and the foreknowledge of God subject to necessity if we say that it is 'necessary' for God to live forever and to foreknow all things. By the same token, His power is not diminished when we say that He 'cannot' die or err. For this is impossible to Him in such a way that, if it were possible, He would have less power. He is indeed rightly called omnipotent even though He cannot die or err. For He is called omnipotent because He does what He wills and does not undergo what He does not will: if this were not so, He certainly would not be omnipotent. But it is precisely because He is omnipotent that there are certain things that He cannot do: just as we say that it is necessary, when we exercise will, that we do so of our own free will. When we say this, it is undoubtedly true, yet we do

not thereby make our freedom of will subject to a necessity which takes away our freedom.

Our wills, therefore, exist, and themselves do whatever we do by willing and which would not be done if we were unwilling. Moreover, even when anyone undergoes something against his will because of the will of other men, it is nonetheless a will that prevails: even if not his own will, it is nonetheless a man's will. The prevailing will's power, however, comes from God. For if it were simply a will but without the power to do what it willed, it would be impeded by the still more powerful will of God. Yet, even in this case, the will would be nothing other than a will: not another's, but that of him who willed, even if he could not accomplish what he willed. Hence, what a man suffers against his will should be attributed not to the wills of human beings or of angels or of any created spirits, but rather to the will of Him Who gives power to wills.

It is not true, then, that, because God foreknew what would be within the power of our wills, nothing therefore lies within the power of our wills. For when He foreknew this, He did not foreknow nothing. Therefore, if He who foreknew what would lie within the power of our wills did not foreknow nothing, but something, then clearly something lies within in the power of our wills even though God has foreknowledge of it. We are, then, in no way compelled either to take away freedom of will in order to retain the foreknowledge of God, or (which is blasphemous) to deny that He has foreknowledge of things to come in order to retain freedom of the will. Rather, we embrace both. Faithfully and truly do we confess both: the former that we may believe well, and the latter that we may live well; for he lives ill who does not believe well concerning God. Far be it from us, then, to seek freedom of the will by denying the foreknowledge of Him by Whose aid we are and shall be free.

It is not true, therefore, that laws, reprimands, exhortations, praise and denunciations are vain; for God knew that these things would come into use, and they are of great efficacy, even as He foreknew that they would be. Prayers, also, avail for the obtaining of those things which He foreknew that He would grant to those who pray; and it is with justice that rewards have been appointed for good deeds and punishments for sins. For a man does not sin

because God foreknew that He would sin. On the contrary, there is no doubt that the man himself sins when he sins. For He Whose foreknowledge cannot fail foresaw not that fate or fortune or something else would sin, but the man himself. If a man chooses not to sin, he certainly does not sin; but if he chooses not to sin, this also was foreknown by God.

11 Of the universal providence of God, in Whose laws all things are contained

The supreme and true God, then, with His Word and Holy Spirit, which three are one, is the one almighty God, the Creator and Maker of every soul and every body. It is by participation in Him that all are happy who are happy in truth and not in emptiness. He made man a rational animal composed of soul and body; and, when man sinned, He did not permit him to go unpunished, but neither did He abandon him without mercy. To good and evil men alike He gave being, in common with the stones; and He gave life capable of reproducing itself, in common with the trees; and sentient life, in common with the beasts; and intellectual life, in common with the angels alone. From Him comes every mode, every species, every order; from Him comes measure, number, weight;¹⁵ from Him comes everything which exists in nature, whatever its kind and whatever its value; from Him come the seeds of forms and the forms of seeds and the movements of seeds and forms. He gave also to flesh its origin, beauty, health, fruitfulness in propagation, and the disposition and wholesome concord of its members. Also, to the irrational soul He has given memory, sensation and appetite; and to the rational soul He has in addition given mind, intelligence and will. Neither heaven nor earth, neither angel nor man, not even the inward parts of the smallest and most inconsiderable animal, nor the feather of a bird, nor a tiny flower of a plant nor the leaf on the tree, has God left unprovided with a harmony and, as it were, a peace among its parts. It can in no wise be believed, then, that He has chosen to exclude the kingdoms of men and their lordships and servants from the laws of His providence.

¹⁵ Cf. *Wisd.* 11,20.

12 By what merits the ancient Romans deserved that
the true God should enlarge their empire even
though they did not worship Him

Next, then, let us consider the virtues of the Romans and the reason why the true God, in Whose power are all the kingdoms of the earth, deigned to help them in enlarging their empire. It was in order to prepare the way for a fuller discussion of this that I composed the preceding book, showing that their gods, whom they deemed worthy of worship even in trivial things, have no power in this matter. Moreover, the foregoing part of the present book, up to the point that we have now reached, has been concerned to dispose of the question of fate, lest anyone, having by now been persuaded that the Roman empire was not propagated and preserved by the worship of these gods, might nonetheless still attribute this to I know not what fate, rather than to the all-powerful will of the most high God.

The ancient and primitive Romans, therefore, worshipped false gods (as did all the other nations apart from the one people of the Hebrews) and sacrificed victims not to God, but to demons. But, as their history teaches with approval, 'they were avid for praise, generous with their wealth, and desired boundless glory and riches with honour'.¹⁶ This glory they loved most ardently. They chose to live for it, and they did not hesitate to die for it. They suppressed all other desires in their boundless desire for this one thing. In short, because they deemed it ignoble for their fatherland to serve and glorious for it to rule and command, the first object of all their desire was freedom, and the second mastery. It was for this reason that they could not endure the rule of kings, and 'appointed two commanders to hold office for a year, whom they called consuls because they were counsellors, and not kings or lords because they reigned or lorded it over them'.¹⁷ (In fact, it seems more correct to derive the word 'king' [*rex*] from 'to rule' [*regere*] rather than from 'to reign' [*regnare*]. 'Kingdom' [*regnum*] comes from *regnare*, but 'king' from *regere*.) Royal majesty, then, was not regarded as the mark of a proper ruler or of a benevolent counsellor, but of a proud master.

¹⁶ Sallust, *Catil.*, 7,6.

¹⁷ *Catil.*, 6,7; cf. Cicero, *De rep.*, 2,31.

Thus, when Tarquin had been expelled and the consuls established, there followed a period when, as an author to whom we have already alluded says in praise of the Romans, 'the city grew with unbelievable speed, so great was the passion for glory that had arisen in the short time after it had achieved liberty'.¹⁸ It was, therefore, this avidity for praise and passion for glory that accomplished so many wondrous things: things which were doubtless praiseworthy and glorious in the estimation of men.

The same Sallust also praises Marcus Cato and Gaius Caesar as great and distinguished men of his own day. He says that for a long time the commonwealth had had no men of great virtue, but that, within his memory, there had arisen these two, outstanding in virtue even though different in character.¹⁹ He records in praise of Caesar that he desired a great command, an army and a new war in which his virtue might shine forth. Thus, it came to be the prayer of men of great ambition that Bellona would excite miserable nations to war and stir them up with her bloody scourge²⁰ so that the Romans might have scope for the display of their valour. This, forsooth, was the result of that vaunted eagerness for praise and passion for glory! In this way, the Romans were led to do many great deeds, first by their love of liberty, and then by their desire for praise and glory. Their most distinguished poet bears witness to both these things when he says: 'When Porsenna demanded that the exiled king Tarquin be restored, and laid siege to the city, then did the sons of Aeneas take up arms for their liberty.'²¹ In those days, therefore, it was a very great thing to the Romans either to die brave or live free.

Once they had achieved freedom, however, so great a desire for glory then arose that liberty seemed to them too little by itself, unless they also sought dominion over others. At that time, men assigned great importance to that promise which the same poet puts into the mouth of Jupiter:

Even cruel Juno, who now exhausts sea, earth and sky with her terror, shall mend her ways, and with me shall protect the

¹⁸ Sallust, *Catil.*, 7.3.

¹⁹ *Catil.*, 5.3f.

²⁰ Virgil, *Aen.*, 8.703.

²¹ *Aen.*, 8.646ff.

Romans, the people of the toga, the masters of all things. So is it decreed. For, as the years pass, there shall come a time when Assaracus's house shall bring Phthia to servitude, and great Mycenae too, and be lord of Argos.²²

These events, indeed, Virgil makes Jupiter predict as if they were yet to come; but the poet was in fact reviewing things already accomplished and beholding them as present realities. I have, however, quoted these words in order to show that, next to liberty, the Romans had so high a regard for dominion that they included it among those things on which they bestowed the highest praise. Hence also it is that the same poet, preferring to the arts of other nations the peculiarly Roman arts of ruling and commanding and subjugating and vanquishing peoples, says:

Let other men with gentler touch fashion bronze into lifelike forms, and bring forth living faces from marble, and plead cases with more skill, and map the paths of heaven, and tell of the rising and falling of the stars. But thou, O Roman, remember that thy task is to subject peoples to thy sway. These arts are thine: to establish ways of peace, to spare the fallen and subdue the proud.²³

And, for as long as they did not give themselves up to pleasure and to the enervation of mind and body by coveting and amassing riches, the Romans practised these arts to good effect. Wealth, however, corrupted their morals and led them to plunder their miserable citizens in order to lavish bounty on vile actors. Hence, such men of base character, who abounded when Sallust wrote his prose and Virgil his verse, no longer sought honour and glory by these arts, but by treachery and deceit. So it is that the former author says:

At first, it was ambition rather than avarice that excited the minds of men: a vice which does, indeed, come close to being a virtue. For glory, honour and power are sought by good and base men alike. The former, however, strive after them by the true way, whereas the latter, because they have no good arts, seek them by means of fraud and deceit.²⁴

²² *Aen.*, 1,279ff.

²³ *Aen.*, 6,847ff.

²⁴ Sallust, *Catil.*, 11,1ff.

And what is meant by 'good arts' here, clearly, is the use of virtuous means rather than deceitful intrigue to arrive at honour, glory and power. Good and base men alike desire these things; but the former – the good man, that is – strives after them by the true way. This way is virtue, by which he endeavours to possess what he seeks: that is, glory, honour and power.

Now the prominence of this desire in the character of the Romans is shown by the fact that the temples of the gods which they established in the closest proximity to one another were those of Virtue and Honour (for they took the gifts of God to be gods themselves). From this, we can understand what kind of virtue they wished to achieve and how their good men conceived it: that is, as honour. But the wicked among them had no virtue even though they longed to have honour, and they endeavoured to obtain it by wicked arts: that is, by fraud and deceit.

More highly praised is Cato; for of him it is said: 'The less he sought glory, the more it followed him.'²⁵ That glory which the Romans so ardently desired to possess is the judgment of men thinking well of other men. But virtue is better, because it is not content with any human testimony apart from that of its own conscience. Hence the apostle says: 'For this is our glory, the testimony of our conscience.'²⁶ And in another place he says: 'But let everyone prove his own work, and then he shall have glory in himself, and not in another.'²⁷ The glory, honour and power, therefore, which the Romans desired for themselves, and which the good strove to attain by good arts, should not be sought after by means of virtue; rather, virtue should be sought by means of them. For no virtue is truly such unless it is directed towards that end in which man's good – the good than which nothing better exists – is found. Hence, even Cato should not have sought the honours that he did seek. Rather, the city should have granted them to him in recognition of his virtue, without his having to seek them.

But although there were at that time two Romans of great virtue, Caesar and Cato, the virtue of Cato seems to have come far closer to true virtue than did that of Caesar. For let us consider the condition of the city at that time, and what it had previously been,

²⁵ *Catil.*, 54,6.

²⁶ 2 Cor. 1,12.

²⁷ Gal. 6,4.

according to the judgment of Cato himself. 'Do not think', he says, that it was by feats of arms that our forefathers made the commonwealth great from its small beginnings. If that were so, we should have a much more excellent state now than they had then. For we have a greater number of friends and citizens, and more arms and horses also. But it was other things than these that made them great, which we do not have: diligence at home, a just rule abroad, and a free spirit in counsel, devoted neither to crime nor to lust. Instead of these, we have luxury and avarice; the public purse is impoverished while private citizens grow rich; we praise riches, but we follow idleness; we do not discriminate between good men and bad; and all the rewards of virtue are possessed by intrigue. And it is no wonder, when each of you takes thought only for his own good: when you are slaves to pleasure at home and to money and favour here in public life – it is no wonder that whatever blow that falls falls upon a commonwealth undefended.²⁸

Anyone who hears these words of Cato (or, rather, of Sallust) no doubt supposes that all or most of the ancient Romans resembled the ones he praises. This is not true, however. If it were, the things which Sallust himself writes, and which I have quoted in the second book of this work,²⁹ would themselves not be true: where he says that the injuries done by the more powerful, and the resulting secession of the common people from the patricians, and other domestic upheavals, existed at the very beginning. After the kings were expelled, men acted with justice and moderation only for as long as they were afraid of Tarquin: that is, only until the grievous war which had been undertaken with Etruria because of him was over. Thereafter, the patricians treated the common people as if they were slaves; they scourged them as the kings had done, drove them from their fields, and, excluding all others, exercised sole power. The patricians desired to be masters, but the common people refused to be slaves; and the end of these discords came only with the second Punic War. For, then, great fear began to oppress them once again, and a new and greater care restrained their unquiet minds from such disturbances and called them back to civil concord.

²⁸ Sallust, *Catil.*, 52,19ff.

²⁹ Bk II,18.

But great feats were accomplished during the Carthaginian wars by a few men who were good after their own fashion; and, when those evil times had been endured or mitigated by the foresight of those few good men, the commonwealth grew great. The same historian says³⁰ that, when he heard and read of the many illustrious deeds which the Roman people performed at home and on the battlefield, at sea or ashore, it occurred to him to wonder by what particular quality it was that these great accomplishments were sustained. For he knew that, time and again, a small band of Romans had contended with great legions of the enemy; and he knew also that wars had been waged with small resources against wealthy kings. He said that, having given the matter much thought, it seemed clear to him that all this had been achieved by the outstanding virtue of a few citizens, and that it was this that had enabled poverty to vanquish wealth and the few to overcome the many. 'But', he says, 'after the city had become corrupted by luxury and idleness, the commonwealth in turn fostered by its very size the vices of its generals and magistrates'. Thus, those men whom Cato praised, who strove after glory, honour and power by the true way – that is, by virtue alone – were few in number. From these men came the industry at home of which Cato speaks, which sought public wealth and private frugality. And so, by contrast, he sets it down as a vice that, when morals had become corrupt, the commonwealth was impoverished by the wealth of private citizens.³¹

13 Of the love of praise which, though a vice, is reckoned a virtue because greater vices are restrained by it

Thus, when illustrious kingdoms had long existed in the East, God willed that there should arise in the West an empire which, though later in time, should be more illustrious still in the breadth and greatness of its sway. And, in order that it might overcome the grave evils which had afflicted many other nations, He granted it to men who, for the sake of honour and praise and glory, so devoted themselves to their fatherland that they did not hesitate to place its safety before their own, even though they sought glory for them-

³⁰ Sallust, *Catil.*, 53,2ff.

³¹ *Catil.*, 52,21f.

selves through it. For the sake of one vice, therefore – that is, the love of praise – they overcame the desire for riches and many other vices. But he understands the matter more truly who acknowledges that even the love of praise is a vice. This, indeed, is something which did not escape the poet Horace, who says: ‘Do you swell with love of praise? There are certain remedies which will restore you to health if you read the book three times.’³² And the same author, in lyric verse, sings as follows, seeking to restrain the love of mastery: ‘You will rule more widely if you can conquer greed of spirit than if you could join Lybia to far Gades, and thus make the two Carthaginian peoples serve one master.’³³

There are, then, those who bridle their baser desires by means of the desire for human praise and glory, and not with the faith of godliness and the love of intelligible beauty given by the Holy Spirit. These are not, therefore, yet holy; they are only less vile. Cicero himself was not able to conceal this fact in those books which he wrote called *De republica*.³⁴ For, having spoken of the education of the city’s ruler, who ought, he says, to be nourished on glory, he goes on to add that the men of old did many wonderful and famous deeds because of their desire for glory. Not only, then, did the men of old not resist this vice: they even considered it worthy to be aroused and kindled, supposing that it would be of benefit to the commonwealth. Not even in his philosophical books does Cicero conceal this pestilential opinion. Indeed, his admission of it there is as clear as day. For when he speaks of those endeavours which are to be pursued for the sake of the true good rather than for the fickle praise of men, he introduces the following as a universal and general statement: ‘Honour fosters the arts, and all men are fired in their endeavours by the prospect of glory; whereas men always neglect those things which are held in low esteem.’³⁵

14 Of the banishment of the love of human praise; for all the glory of the righteous resides in God

Beyond doubt, therefore, it is better to resist this desire for praise than to yield to it; for the purer a man is from this defilement the

³² Horace, *Epist.* 1,1,36f.

³³ *Carm.*, 2,2,9ff.

³⁴ *De rep.*, 5,7,9.

³⁵ *Tusc. disp.*, 1,2,4.

more nearly does he approach the likeness of God. It may be that, in this life, it cannot be completely eradicated from the heart. After all, it does not cease to tempt the minds even of those who are well advanced in virtue. But let the lust for glory be at any rate so surpassed by the love of righteousness that, if at any point 'those things which are held in low esteem' should be neglected even if they are good and right, the love of human praise will blush and yield to the love of truth. If the lust for glory holds a greater place in the heart than the fear or love of God, then this vice is so inimical to godly faith that the Lord said: 'How can ye believe, who look for glory from one another, and do not seek the glory which is from God alone?'³⁶ Again, concerning certain persons who had believed in God yet feared to confess it openly, the evangelist says: 'They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.'³⁷

But the holy apostles did not do this. They preached the name of Christ not only in places where it was held in low esteem (as Cicero says: 'Men always neglect those things which are held in low esteem'), but even where it was held in the utmost detestation. They held fast to what they had heard from the good Teacher who is also the Physician of minds: 'If anyone shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father Who is in heaven, and before the angels of God.'³⁸ In the midst of curses and reviling, in the midst of the bitterest persecutions and cruel tortures, they were not deterred from preaching human salvation by the noise of human hatred. By their godly deeds and words and by their godly lives they in a manner conquered hard hearts and filled them with the peace of righteousness, so that great glory followed them in the Church of Christ. But they did not rest in that glory as if it were the virtue which they sought as their end. Rather, they referred that glory itself to the glory of God, by Whose grace they were what they were.³⁹ And with that same spark they kindled the hearts of those in their care, so that they also burned with the love of Him Who, again, had made them what they were. For their Master had taught them to be good men, but not for the sake of human glory; for He said: 'Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before

³⁶ John 5,44.

³⁷ John 12,43.

³⁸ Matt. 10,33; Luke 12,9.

³⁹ Cf. 1 Cor. 15,10.

men to be seen of them, or otherwise ye shall not have a reward from your Father Who is in heaven.⁴⁰ But, again, lest they should understand this wrongly and, for fear of pleasing men, do less righteousness to them by concealing their goodness, He showed them for what purpose they ought to make it known. He said: 'Let your works shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father Who is in heaven.'⁴¹ Not, then, 'that ye may be seen by them', that is, not with the wish that they may turn and notice you, for you are not anything at all in yourselves; but 'that they may glorify your Father Who is in heaven' and so turn to Him and become what you are.

And the martyrs followed these apostles. In doing so, they surpassed such men as Scaevola and Curtius and the Decii in true virtue – because in true godliness – and in their innumerable multitude. They also surpassed them in the fact that their pains were not self-inflicted, but inflicted by others. But the heroes of Rome were members of an earthly city, and the goal of all the services which they performed for it was its security. They sought a kingdom not in heaven, but upon earth: not in the realm of life eternal, but in that region where the dead pass away and are succeeded by the dying. What else were they to love, then, but glory, by which they sought to find even after death a kind of life in the mouths of those who praised them?

15 Of the temporal reward which God granted to the good morals of the Romans

It was not God's purpose, then, to give to these persons eternal life with the angels in His Heavenly City. For only true godliness leads to that fellowship: the godliness which offers to the one true God alone that service of religion which the Greeks call *latreia*. But if He had not even granted them the merely earthly glory of supreme empire, a reward would not have been rendered to their good arts – that is, to the virtues by which they strove to attain so great a glory. For it is to such men, who seem to do some good in order that they may be glorified by men, that the Lord Himself said: 'Verily I say

⁴⁰ Matt. 6,1.

⁴¹ Matt. 5,16.

unto you, they have received their reward.' So also, the Romans held their own private interests in low esteem for the sake of the common good, that is, for the commonwealth. For the sake of its treasury they resisted avarice, and they took counsel for the good of their fatherland with unfettered minds; nor were they guilty of any offence against its laws, or of any unwholesome desires. By all these arts did they seek honour and power and glory, as by a true way. They were honoured among almost all the nations; they imposed the laws of their empire upon many races; and they are glorious among almost all peoples to this day, in literature and history. They have no reason to complain of the justice of the highest and true God: 'they have received their reward'.⁴²

16 Of the reward of the holy citizens of the Eternal City, to whom the examples of virtue exhibited by the Romans may be of benefit

Different indeed is the reward of the saints, who in this life suffer reproaches for the sake of the city of God, which is odious to those who love this world. That city is eternal. There, no one is born, because no one dies; there, true felicity is found in full measure: not a goddess, but a gift of God. From that city we receive the pledge of our faith while we sigh for its beauty during our earthly pilgrimage. There, the sun does not rise upon the good and evil; rather, the Sun of righteousness protects only the good.⁴³ There, no great industry will be devoted to the task of enriching the public treasury at the expense of private riches, for the treasury of truth will be the common property of all. Moreover, it was not only for the sake of rendering due reward to the citizens of Rome that her empire and glory were so greatly extended in the sight of men. This was done also for the advantage of the citizens of the eternal City during their pilgrimage here. It was done so that they might diligently and soberly contemplate such examples, and so see how great a love they owe to their supernal fatherland for the sake of life

⁴² Matt. 6,2.

⁴³ Cf. Matt. 5,45; Mal. 4,2.

eternal, if an earthly city was so greatly loved by its citizens for the sake of merely human glory.

**17 For what profit the Romans waged wars, and
what benefits they conferred upon those whom they
conquered**

As far as this mortal life is concerned, which is spent and finished in a few days, what difference does it make under what rule a man lives who is soon to die, provided only that those who rule him do not compel him to do what is impious and wicked? Apart from the great slaughter involved in the wars by which they accomplished it, did the Romans do any harm to those nations upon whom, when they had subdued them, they imposed their laws? This would indeed have been accomplished more successfully had it been done by agreement; but, in that case, there would have been no glory of conquest. For the Romans themselves did not live exempt from the laws which they imposed upon others. Thus, if they had managed to impose them without the help of Mars and Bellona, so that Victory too had no place – since no one could be victorious where no one had fought – would not the Romans have been on a merely equal footing with the other nations? And this would have been especially true if that most gracious and humane step had been taken at once which was taken later: namely, the admission of all who belonged to the empire to the fellowship of the city, so that they became Roman citizens. In this way, that which had once belonged to a few would belong to all. The common people, of course, who had no land of their own, would live at the public expense; but it would be better for good administrators of the commonwealth to make this provision by the free consent of the people than by extorting it from the conquered.

But as to those things which truly confer dignity upon mankind, namely, security and good morals, I entirely fail to see what difference it makes, aside from the most empty pride of human glory, that some men should be conquerors and others conquered. Those men who burned with lust for glory and were ardent to wage war: they have received their reward. Do not the lands subject to them pay tribute? Are they not privileged to learn what others may not

learn? Are there not many senators in other lands who do not even know Rome by sight? But take away their boasting, and what are all men, after all, but men? Even if the perversity of the present age permitted honours to be distributed only to the better men, human honour should still not be considered as any great thing, for it is as smoke, which has no weight.

Even in matters of human honour, however, we may profit from the kindness of the Lord our God by considering what great things those Romans despised, what they endured, and what lusts they subdued. They did all this for the sake of merely human glory, so that they might come to merit such glory as a reward for their virtues. Let this consideration, then, be useful to us in subduing pride. For that City in which it is promised that we shall reign is as far removed from Rome as heaven is from earth, as eternal life is from temporal joy, as solid glory from empty praise, as the fellowship of angels from that of mortal men, and as the light of the sun and moon from the light of Him Who made the sun and moon. We who are citizens of so great a fatherland, therefore, should not look upon ourselves as having accomplished any great thing if we have performed some good works or endured some evils in order to attain it. For the Romans performed such works and underwent such evils for an earthly country which they possessed already. And all these things are especially to be considered because the remission of sins which gathers together the citizens of the eternal country resembles, in a certain sense, as though foreshadowed by it, that asylum of Romulus by which the multitude which was to found the city of Rome was brought together by the promise of impunity from all its crimes.

18 How far Christians ought to be from boasting if they have done anything for the love of their eternal fatherland, when the Romans did such great things for the sake of human glory and an earthly city

How is it any great thing, then, to despise all the blandishments of this world, however sweet, for the sake of that heavenly fatherland when, for the sake of this temporal and earthly one, Brutus was able to kill even his own sons? This is something which the heavenly country compels no one to do. But it is certainly more difficult to

slay one's sons than it is to do what that heavenly country does require: that is, either to give to the poor those things heaped up and preserved to be given to one's own sons, or, in circumstances which indicate that we should do so, to relinquish such things for the sake of righteousness. For neither we nor our sons are made happy by earthly riches. These things must either be lost while we are still alive or, after we are dead, acquired by someone whom we do not know, or perhaps by someone whom we would not wish to have them. Rather, it is God, Who is the true wealth of the mind, Who makes us happy. As for Brutus, even the poet who praises him bears witness to his unhappiness when he killed his sons; for he says: 'When their father found his children fomenting new wars, he punished them himself, for the sake of fair liberty. But what an unhappy man this is, no matter how much his deed may be celebrated in days to come!' And in what follows the poet consoles him in his unhappiness, saying: 'But love of country drove him, and the immense love of praise.'⁴⁴

These, then, are the two things which drove the Romans to perform such wondrous deeds: love of liberty, and the desire for human praise. In order to secure the liberty of dying men, and out of the desire for human praise which is common to all mortals, a father could slay his sons! If this is so, then, is it any great thing if, for the sake of that true liberty which has set us free from the dominion of iniquity and death and the devil, we are required not to slay our sons, but to regard Christ's poor as our sons? Is it any great thing if we do this not through the desire of human praise, but because of a love that will set men free not from King Tarquin, but from demons and the prince of demons?

There was another Roman notable called Torquatus, who slew his son. He did this, not because his son had fought against his country, but because, though he fought on his country's behalf, he did so in violation of the command which had been given by his father the general. Challenged by the foe, he fought with youthful ardour. Then, however, even though he conquered, he was put to death lest more harm should come from the example of authority disobeyed than good from the glorious deed of slaying an enemy. Why, then, should Christians boast if, for the laws of an immortal

⁴⁴ *Aen.*, 6,820ff.

fatherland, they hold in contempt all the good things of earth: things which are surely loved far less than sons?

Furius Camillus, after he had thrown off from the necks of his countrymen the yoke of Veii, their most bitter foe, was condemned and banished by those who envied him. Yet he again delivered his ungrateful country from the Gauls, because he had no other place in which he could live with more glory. Why, then, is a man extolled as though he had done something grand if, having perhaps suffered dishonour and grievous injury in the Church at the hands of fleshly enemies, he does not go over to her enemies the heretics, or himself set up some heresy against her, but instead defends her with all his might against the most pernicious wickedness of the heretics? For this is not because he lacks another place where he may live with glory in the estimation of men, but because he lacks another place where he may gain eternal life.

Mucius sought to induce King Porsenna to make peace with the Romans, whom he was oppressing with most grievous warfare. Because he was not able to kill Porsenna himself, but killed another whom he mistook for him, Mucius stretched forth his right hand into the fire that was burning on the altar before the king's eyes. As he did so, he said to Porsenna that there were many more such men as he saw him to be, who had sworn to kill him. The king, appalled by such fortitude and at the thought of a conspiracy of such men as this, at once desisted from all his warlike purposes and made peace. In view of this, then, who can claim to deserve the kingdom of heaven even if he has given up to the flames not one hand, but even his whole body for the sake of it, and not of his own free will but at the behest of some persecutor?

Curtius, fully armed, spurred on his horse and hurled himself into a yawning chasm in the earth, in obedience to the oracles of his gods. For they had commanded that the Romans should cast into that chasm the best thing that they possessed, and the Romans could not understand the oracle in any other way than this: that, since they excelled in men and arms, the gods had commanded that an armed man should be flung headlong to his death. What great thing, then, shall we say that anyone has done for his eternal fatherland if he has died a similar death, not, however, hurling himself into a chasm of his own free will, but having suffered this death at the hands of some enemy of his faith? For from his Lord, Who is

indeed the king of that same fatherland, he has received a far more certain oracle: 'Fear not them who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul.'⁴⁵

The Decii devoted themselves to death, consecrating themselves after a certain fashion and by means of certain words, in order that, when they fell and appeased the anger of the gods with their blood, the Roman army should by this means be delivered. But if the Romans could do this, then by no means should the holy martyrs be proud, as though of something worthy of a share in that fatherland where happiness is eternal and true, if, even to the shedding of their blood, loving not only the brethren for whom it was shed, but also the enemies by whom it was shed, as they were commanded, they have striven to surpass one another in the faith of love and the love of faith.

When Marcus Pulvillus was dedicating the temple of Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, men of ill will brought him a false report of the death of his son. They did this in the hope that he would be so disturbed by these tidings that he would withdraw and leave his colleague to obtain the glory of the dedication. He held this report in such contempt, however, that he commanded that the body should be cast out unburied, so wholly had the desire for glory overcome in his heart the grief of loss. How, then, can that man say that he has done any great thing for the preaching of the Gospel, by which the citizens of the supernal land are delivered from their many errors and brought together, to whom the Lord said, when he was anxious for the burial of his father: 'Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead.'⁴⁶

Marcus Regulus, in order not to fail in the oath which he had sworn to his most cruel enemies, returned to them from the very city of Rome. When the Romans sought to dissuade him, he is said to have answered that, having been a slave to Africans, he could not possibly now hold the rank of an honourable citizen of Rome. Then, the Carthaginians put him to death by the most dreadful tortures because he had spoken against them in the Senate. What tortures, then, are not to be despised for the sake of keeping faith with that fatherland to whose blessedness life itself leads? Or 'what shall be

⁴⁵ Matt. 10,28.

⁴⁶ Matt. 8,22.

rendered unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me⁴⁷ if, for the sake of the faith which is due to Him, a man has suffered such things as Regulus suffered in order to keep faith with his most deadly foes?

How will a Christian dare to praise himself for the voluntary poverty which enables him to walk more lightly, during the pilgrimage of this life, on that path which leads to the country where God Himself is the true riches? How will he boast of this when he hears or reads of Lucius Valerius, who died while holding the office of consul, and who was so poor that the money to pay for his funeral had to be collected from the people? Or when he hears or reads of Quintius Cincinnatus, who owned only four *iugera* of land, which he was tilling with his own hands when he was summoned from the plough and made dictator? This was an office more honourable even than that of consul; yet, when he had overcome the enemy and attained great glory, he nonetheless remained in the same poverty.

Again, how will anyone proclaim that he has done a great thing in refusing to be seduced from the fellowship of the eternal country by any of this world's rewards, when he learns of Fabricius? Despite the great gifts offered to him by Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, who promised him even the fourth part of his kingdom, Fabricius could not be sundered from his allegiance to the city of Rome, but preferred to remain in his poverty as a private citizen.

Indeed, although the republic – that is, the property of the people, the fatherland, the commonwealth – possessed great wealth and riches, the people themselves were so poor in their own houses that one of them, who had already been twice a consul, was expelled from that Senate of poor men by the censor because he was found to possess silver vessels of ten pounds in weight! Such was the poverty of those very men by whose triumphs the public treasury was enriched. The Christians make a common property of their riches with a far more excellent purpose: namely, so that they may distribute to each according to his need, in compliance with what is written in the Acts of the Apostles, with no one calling anything his own and all things being held in common.⁴⁸ But should they not understand that they are not on this account to puff themselves up

⁴⁷ Psalm 116, 2.

⁴⁸ Acts 2, 44; 4, 32.

with boasting? For they do this in order to obtain a place in the company of angels, whereas those others, the Romans, though they did the same thing, did so only to preserve their own glory.

How could these deeds, and the others of the same kind found in the annals of the Romans, have become known, and been proclaimed with so great a fame, had not the Roman empire spread far and wide as its magnificent successes made it greater? It is thanks to that empire, so broad and enduring, so famous and glorious for the virtues of its great men, that those men received the rewards that they sought by their striving, and that we have before us such examples for our necessary admonition. If, for the sake of the most glorious City of God, we do not hold fast to the same virtues that they held fast to for the sake of the glory of an earthly city, let us be pierced with shame. And if we do hold fast to them, let us not be lifted up with pride; for, as the apostle says: 'The sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us.'⁴⁹ But the lives of those Romans were esteemed worthy enough to obtain human glory in this present age.

Thus it was also that the Jews, who put Christ to death, were most righteously handed over to the glory of the Romans. The New Testament clearly reveals what is veiled in the Old:⁵⁰ that the one true God is to be worshipped not for the sake of those earthly and temporal goods which divine providence grants to good and evil men alike, but for the sake of eternal life and everlasting rewards, and the fellowship of the supernal City itself. And so it was that the Romans, who sought and gained earthly glory by their virtues, such as they were, conquered those who, in their great wickedness, slew and rejected the Giver of true glory and of the Eternal City.

19 How the desire for glory and the lust for mastery differ from one another

There is, indeed, a difference between the desire for human glory and the lust for mastery. Although he who delights excessively in human glory will also be much inclined ardently to desire mastery, those who aspire to the true glory even of human praise will

⁴⁹ Rom. 8,18.

⁵⁰ Cf. Bk IV,33; XVI,26; Augustine, *Quaest. in Hept.*, 2,83.

nonetheless take care not to displease men of good judgment. For there are many good aspects of character, and many persons are competent judges of such aspects even though not many have them. And it is by means of such good qualities of character that those men ascend to glory and authority and lordship of whom Sallust says that they strive after these things 'by the true way'.⁵¹

By contrast, however, one who desires to rule and command but who lacks that love of glory which will deter him from displeasing men of good judgment will very often seek to obtain what he loves even by the most blatant acts of wickedness. He who loves glory, therefore, will either ascend to it by the true way, or strive for it by treachery and deceit, wishing to seem good even though he is not.

To one who possesses the virtues, then, it is a great virtue to despise glory, and his contempt for it is known to the vision of God even though it is not revealed to human judgment. For it does not matter what a man may do before the eyes of others in order to convince them that he despises glory: if they believe that he is doing this only to obtain greater praise – greater glory, that is – he has no means of demonstrating to the senses of those who suspect him that matters are really otherwise. But he who despises the judgment of those who praise him will also despise their foolish suspicions. If he is a truly good man, however, he will not despise their salvation; for so great is the righteousness of the man who receives his virtues from the spirit of God that he loves even his enemies. Indeed, he so loves them that he desires to correct those who hate and revile him, and to make them his companions not in an earthly fatherland, but in a heavenly. As for those who praise him, he does not make light of their love even though he makes light of their praise; neither does he wish them to be mistaken in their praise, lest he should forfeit their love. Therefore, he earnestly entreats them to direct their praise rather to Him from Whom a man receives whatever he has that is justly praised.

He, however, who despises glory yet is avid for mastery surpasses even the beasts in the vices of cruelty and luxury. Of such a kind, indeed, were certain of the Romans, who, though having no desire for esteem, certainly did not lack the lust for mastery. History contains examples of many such; but it was Nero Caesar who first

⁵¹ *Catil.*, II,2.

achieved the summit and, so to say, the citadel of these vices. So great was his love of luxury that one might have thought that there was no need to fear any manly act from him; yet so great was his cruelty that anyone who did not know better would have believed that there was nothing unmanly in him. But the power of lordship is given even to such men as this only by the providence of the supreme God, when He judges that the condition of human affairs is deserving of such lords. The divine voice is clear on this matter, for the wisdom of God speaks as follows: 'By me kings reign, and tyrants possess the land.'⁵² It might be supposed that the word 'tyrant' here means not bad and unjust kings, but brave men, as in the ancient sense in which Virgil uses it, when he says: 'It shall be a sign of peace to me, to have touched the right hand of the tyrant.'⁵³ Elsewhere, however, it is most clearly said of God that He 'maketh the man who is an hypocrite to reign by reason of the people's wickedness'.⁵⁴

I have, then, explained to the best of my ability the reason why the one true and just God aided the Romans in achieving the glory of so great an empire; for they were good men according to the lights of the earthly city. There may, of course, be another and more hidden cause also, known to God but not to ourselves, and arising from the diverse merits of the human race. At all events, however, let it be agreed among all men who are truly godly that no one who is without true godliness – that is, without the worship of the true God – can have true virtue, and that virtue is not truly such when it serves human glory. Nonetheless, those who are not citizens of that eternal City which is called the City of God in our sacred writings are more useful to the earthly city when they have even that imperfect kind of virtue than they would be if they did not have it.

But when those who are gifted with true godliness and live good lives also know the art of governing peoples, nothing could be more fortunate for human affairs than that, by the mercy of God, they should also have the power to do so. Such men, however, no matter how great the virtues that they are able to possess in this life, attribute them only to the grace of God, Who has given these things to

⁵² Prov. 8,15.

⁵³ *Aen.*, 7,266.

⁵⁴ Job 34,30.

them according to their good will, their belief and their prayers. At the same time, they understand how much they lack that perfection of righteousness which exists only in the fellowship of the holy angels, of which they strive to be worthy. Moreover, however much we may praise and proclaim the virtue which serves the glory of men without true godliness, it is not for one moment to be compared with even the first and least virtue of the saints who have placed their hope in the grace and mercy of the true God.

20 That it is as shameful for the virtues to serve
human glory as it would be for them to serve bodily
pleasure

There are certain philosophers who regard virtue as the highest human good. These wish to shame certain other philosophers who, though they approve of the virtues, see them as a means to the end of bodily pleasure, which they think should be sought for its own sake, and the virtues for the sake of it. In order to shame them, then, the former paint a picture in words, as it were, in which they depict Pleasure as some voluptuous queen seated upon a royal throne.⁵⁵ The virtues serve her as handmaidens, watching for her nod so that they may do whatever she commands. She commands Prudence vigilantly to enquire how Pleasure may reign and be safe. She commands Justice to bestow whatever benefits she can, in order to secure the friendships necessary for bodily comfort, and to wrong no one lest, if laws are broken, Pleasure should then not be able to live in security. If there should arise some bodily sorrow which does not actually occasion death, she commands Fortitude to keep her mistress – that is, Pleasure – steadfastly in her thoughts, and to mitigate the pangs of present pain by the recollection of former delights. She commands Temperance to take only a certain quantity of food, no matter how delicious, lest a harmful lack of moderation should interfere with health and therefore (for the Epicureans think that pleasure is largely a matter of bodily health) with Pleasure.

The virtues, then, with all the dignity of their glory, are to be the slaves of Pleasure, portrayed as some imperious and disreputable female. Nothing, the philosophical critics of this view say, is more

⁵⁵ Cf. Cicero, *De fin.*, 2, 21, 69.

ignominious and degraded, and less capable of being borne by the eyes of good men, than this; and what they say is right. But even if another picture were to be painted, in which the virtues were in the service of human glory, I do not think that this would have a proper beauty either. For though Glory is indeed not a voluptuous woman, she is still puffed up and has great vanity. And so it is not worthy for her to be served by any solid and firm virtues: for Prudence to foresee nothing, Justice to bestow nothing, Fortitude to endure nothing, and Temperance to moderate nothing other than for the sake of pleasing men and serving an inflated glory.

Others again despise glory, spurn the judgment of others, and, supposing themselves wise, please only themselves. But these men also will not be able to defend themselves against the vile charge of debasing the virtues. For their virtue – if, indeed, they have any – is made subject to human praise in another way; for the man who is pleasing only to himself is still nothing other than a man. But the man of true godliness, who loves, believes and hopes in God, attends more to those things in himself which displease him than to those, if there are any, which are pleasing to him or, rather, to the Truth. Nor does he attribute what is now pleasing in him to anything other than the mercy of Him Whom he fears to displease. To Him he gives thanks for what is healed in him, and pours out his prayers for those things which are as yet unhealed.

**21 That the Roman realm was established by God,
from Whom all power comes, and by Whose
providence all things are ruled**

If all these things are so, then, let us not attribute the power to grant kingdoms and empires to any save the true God. He gives happiness in the kingdom of Heaven only to the godly. Earthly kingdoms, however, He gives to the godly and the ungodly alike, as it may please Him, Whose good pleasure is never unjust. But although I have in some measure spoken of those things which it has pleased Him to make clear to me, it is a task too great and too far surpassing my powers to search out the secrets of human affairs and by clear inspection to give judgment as to the merits of kingdoms.

He, therefore, Who is the one true God, Who never forsakes the human race either in His judgment or His aid, gave a kingdom to the Romans when it pleased Him and to the extent that it pleased Him to do so. He also gave one to the Assyrians, and then again to the Persians, by whom, as their annals tell, only two gods were worshipped, one good and the other bad. As touching the Hebrew people, concerning whom I have already said as much as seemed necessary, I will say no more than that they worshipped only one God for as long as they were a kingdom.

It is He, therefore, Who gave crops to the Persians even though they did not worship the goddess Segetia. He gave them the other gifts of the earth even though they did not worship the many gods whom the Romans supposed to preside each over some individual thing, and several of whom, indeed, they appointed to one particular duty. And He granted the Persians a kingdom even though they did not worship those gods to whom the Romans believed their own kingdom to be due.

So also in the case of individual men. He Who gave power to Marius also gave it to Gaius Caesar; He Who gave it to Augustus also gave it to Nero; He Who gave it to the Vespasii, father and son, the gentlest of emperors, also gave it to Domitian, the cruellest; and – although it is not necessary to name them all – He Who gave it to the Christian Constantine also gave it to the apostate Julian. This last, though a gifted intellect, loved mastery, and was seduced by a sacrilegious and detestable curiosity. Addicted as he was to vain oracles, and assured by them of victory, he set fire to the ships in which essential supplies were to be transported. Then, pressing fervidly on with unrestrained daring, he was soon slain as the price of his temerity, and his army was left unsupplied in enemy territory. They never could have escaped from this plight had not the boundaries of the Roman empire been changed, contrary to the auspice of the god Terminus of which we spoke in the preceding book.⁵⁶ For the god Terminus, who had not yielded to Jupiter, yielded to necessity. Clearly, all these things are ruled and governed as it pleases the one true God. Though the causes be hidden, are they unjust?

⁵⁶ Bk iv, 23.

22 That the durations and outcomes of wars depend upon the judgment of God

So too, the durations of wars are also determined by His will and just judgment, either to chastise or comfort the human race. This is why some wars are brought to a close more quickly and others more slowly. The war of Pompey with the pirates and the third Punic War of Scipio were brought to a close with incredible speed and in a very short time. The war with the fugitive gladiators, though many Roman commanders, including two consuls, were defeated in it, and there was horrible suffering and devastation in Italy, was nonetheless extinguished, having extinguished much else, in its third year. The Picentes, Marsi and Peligni were not foreign races, but Italians, who, after long and most devoted service under the Roman yoke, attempted to raise their heads in liberty, even though many nations had by now been subjected to the Roman sway, and Carthage had been destroyed. In this Italian war, the Romans were very often defeated, and two consuls and other most noble senators perished; yet this evil was not prolonged for a great duration of time, for the fifth year saw an end to it. The second Punic War, however, brought with it the greatest loss and calamity to the commonwealth. For eighteen years, indeed, it drained, and almost consumed, the strength of the Romans; and there were two battles in which almost seventy thousand Romans were slain. The first Punic War lasted for twenty-three years; and the Mithridatic Wars for forty. Nor may we suppose that the Romans were braver in their early days, and so able to bring their wars to a speedier end. For it was in those early times, which are so much praised for every virtue, that the Samnite War was protracted for almost fifty years, and, in that war, the Romans suffered such a defeat that they were even sent under the yoke. But because they did not love glory for the sake of justice, but seem rather to have loved justice for the sake of glory, they subsequently broke the treaty of peace which they had made.

I mention these things because there are many men, ignorant of past history – and some also who conceal their knowledge – who, if they see some war in the Christian era protracted somewhat beyond what is usual, at once fling themselves most furiously into an attack upon our religion. They exclaim that, if the Christian

religion did not exist, and if the gods were worshipped according to the ancient rites, then that Roman virtue which, with the aid of Mars and Bellona, brought so many earlier wars to a speedy close, would very quickly put an end to this one also. Let those who have read history, therefore, recollect how protracted were the wars waged by the Romans of old, and how varied was their outcome, and how lamentable the slaughter which they occasioned. For the earth, like a tempestuous sea, is wont to be lashed by the various storms of such evils. And so let them eventually confess what they do not like to confess, and not destroy themselves and deceive the ignorant by their mad railing against God.

23 Of the war in which Radagaisus, king of the
Goths and a worshipper of demons, was defeated
with his huge army in a single day

There is an event of very recent date, falling within my own memory, in which God wrought miraculously and mercifully, which our adversaries do not, however, remember with gratitude. Rather, they endeavour, as far as they can, to cause all men to forget it; and, if I were to fail to mention it, I should be equally ungrateful. For Radagaisus, king of the Goths, had encamped in the vicinity of the city with a huge and fearsome army, and was now threatening the necks of the Romans. Yet in a single day he was so swiftly beaten that, while not a single Roman was, I do not say killed, but even injured, more than a hundred thousand of his army were laid low, and he himself was soon captured and duly suffered the penalty of death. Now if that man, ungodly as he was, had entered Rome with so great and so ungodly a horde, whom would he have spared? To which of the shrines of the martyrs would he have done honour? In the presence of what person would he have shown the fear of God? Whose blood would he have chosen to leave unshed, and whose modesty intact? And how the Goths would have lifted up their voices to their gods! With what insults would they have boasted that Radagaisus had thus conquered and grown so mighty because he placated and summoned the gods with daily sacrifice, which the Christian religion did not allow the Romans to do! Even as he was approaching the place where he was to be brought low at the command of the Supreme Majesty, and as his fame was every-

where growing great, we at Carthage were told that the pagans believed, proclaimed and boasted that Radagaisus could not be beaten. They believed that, thanks to the help and protection of the gods who befriended him because of the sacrifices which he daily offered them, he could never be overcome by those who performed no such rites for the Roman gods and permitted no one else to do so. Yet the wretched Romans do not now give thanks for the great mercy of God Who, though He had resolved to chastise with a barbarian invasion the morals of men who deserved to suffer far worse, tempered His indignation with such great mercy. For, first, He caused Radagaisus to be miraculously defeated, lest the glory of victory be given to the demons whom he was known to supplicate, and the minds of weak men be thus overthrown. Then, He allowed Rome to be captured by those other barbarians who, out of reverence for the Christian religion, and against all previous customs of war, spared those who sought refuge in the holy places.⁵⁷ Indeed, these latter barbarians so strongly opposed the demons in the name of Christ that they seemed to be carrying on a far fiercer war with them than with men. In this way did the true Lord and Governor of all things both scourge the Romans with His mercy and, by the incredible defeat of the worshippers of demons, show that sacrifice to demons is not necessary even for the wellbeing of present things. Thus, those who do not contend out of mere obstinacy, but give prudent attention to what we are saying, will not forsake the true religion because of the exigencies of the present time. Rather, they will hold fast to it in the most faithful expectation of life eternal.

24 What was the happiness of the Christian emperors, and whether it was true happiness

For we do not say that certain Christian emperors were happy because they ruled for a longer time, or because they died in peace and left behind sons to rule as emperors, or because they subdued the enemies of the commonwealth, or because they were able to avoid and suppress uprisings against them by hostile citizens. For even certain worshippers of demons, who do not belong to the kingdom of God to which these emperors belong, have deserved to

⁵⁷ Cf. Bk I, I.

receive these and other gifts and consolations of this wretched life; and this is to be attributed to His mercy, Who does not wish those who believe in Him to desire such things as their highest good. Rather, we say that they are happy if they rule justly; if they are not lifted up by the talk of those who accord them sublime honours or pay their respects with an excessive humility, but remember that they are only men; if they make their power the handmaid of His majesty by using it to spread His worship to the greatest possible extent; if they fear, love and worship God; if they love that Kingdom which they are not afraid to share with others more than their own; if they are slow to punish and swift to pardon; if they resort to punishment only when it is necessary to the government and defence of the commonwealth, and never to gratify their own enmity; if they grant pardon, not so that unjust men may enjoy impunity, but in the hope of bringing about their correction; if they compensate for whatever severe measures they may be forced to decree with the gentleness of mercy and the generosity of benevolence; if their own self-indulgence is as much restrained as it might have been unchecked; if they prefer to govern wicked desires more than any people whatsoever; if they do all these things not out of craving for empty glory, but from love of eternal felicity; and if, for their sins, they do not neglect to offer to their true God the sacrifices of humility and contrition and prayer. We say that, for the time being, such Christian emperors are happy in hope and that, in time to come, when that to which we now look forward has arrived, they will be so in possession.

25 Of the prosperity which God bestowed upon the Christian emperor Constantine

For the good God gave to the emperor Constantine, who did not seek the favour of demons, but worshipped the true God Himself, such a full measure of earthly rewards as no one would dare to hope for. He did this lest men, believing that God is to be worshipped only for the sake of eternal life, should suppose that no one could attain to these exalted things and rule on earth without seeking the favour of demons. For many do indeed believe this, thinking that such spirits have great power in these matters. To Constantine, then, God granted it that he should found a city to be a companion

of Rome in empire: a daughter, as it were, of Rome herself, but without any temple or image of the demons. Also, Constantine's reign was long, and he held and defended the whole Roman world as sole Augustus. He was supremely victorious in the wars which he organised and waged, and prospered entirely in the overthrowing of tyrants. When he died, of sickness and old age, he was full of years, and he left sons to reign as emperors in his stead.

No emperor, however, should be a Christian merely in the hope of securing the felicity which Constantine enjoyed; for every man should be a Christian only for the sake of eternal life. God removed Jovian far more quickly than He did Julian, and he permitted Gratian to be slain by the sword of a tyrant. Gratian's death, however, was far less painful in its circumstances than was that of Pompey the Great, who worshipped the supposed gods of Rome. For Pompey could not be avenged by Cato, whom he had, so to speak, left as his heir to the civil war. By contrast (although the minds of the godly do not require such solace), Gratian was avenged by Theodosius, whom he had caused to share in his royal power even though he had a little brother of his own; for Gratian was more eager to secure a faithful colleague than to achieve an excess of power.

26 Of the faith and godliness of Theodosius Augustus

Thus, Theodosius preserved true loyalty to Gratian not only while the latter lived, but after his death also. For when Gratian's young brother Valentinian had been banished by Gratian's slayer Maximus, Theodosius, as a Christian, took him under his protection in his part of the empire. He watched over him with the affection of a father even though, since Valentinian was destitute of all resources, Theodosius could have removed him with no effort had he been fired more by the desire to rule than by the love of doing good. Hence, he chose rather to protect him, to confer imperial dignity upon him, and to console him with humanity and grace. Then, even though Maximus had been made terrible by success, Theodosius did not, even in the midst of his anxious cares, lapse into sacrilegious and unlawful superstitions. Instead, he sent to John, a hermit established in Egypt – for he had learned that this servant

of God, whose fame was spreading far and wide, was gifted with the spirit of prophecy – and from him received a most certain assurance of victory.

He soon destroyed the tyrant Maximus and, with the greatest mercy and veneration, restored the boy Valentinian to that part of the empire from which he had been caused to flee. When Valentinian died shortly afterwards, whether by treachery or by some other plot or accident, another tyrant, Eugenius, was unlawfully substituted as emperor in his stead. Thereupon Theodosius, having once more received a prophetic answer and been reassured by his faith in it, crushed the tyrant and overcame his most powerful army, although more by prayer than by the sword. Soldiers who were there have told me that the missiles which they were hurling were snatched from their hands by a strong wind blowing from the direction of Theodosius against his enemies. Not only did this increase the velocity of the missiles which were being hurled at them: it even turned their own missiles back against them, to pierce their own bodies. Hence even the poet Claudian, though a stranger to the name of Christ, nonetheless says in praise of Theodosius: 'O too much beloved of God; for thee even heaven fights and, with one accord, the winds come at the trumpet's call!'⁵⁸

Having won the victory, as he had believed and foretold that he would, Theodosius threw down the statues of Jupiter which had been consecrated against him by I know not what rites and set up in the Alps. The thunderbolts of these statues, which were made of gold, he laughingly and generously gave to his messengers, who (as the joy of the occasion permitted) were jokingly saying that they would like to be struck by such thunderbolts. The sons of his enemies, whose fathers had been slain not so much by his command as by the violence of war, took refuge in a church even though they were not yet Christians. Wishing to take advantage of this situation to make Christians of them, and loving them with Christian charity, he did not deprive them of their property, but indeed increased their honours. After the victory, he permitted private enmities to prevail in no one. He was not like Cinna and Marius and Sulla and other such men in the civil wars, who would not allow what was finished to be finished. Rather, instead of wishing the end of the

⁵⁸ *De tertio consulatu Honorii panegyricus*, III, 96f; cf. Orosius, *Hist.*, 7, 35, 21.

war to bring harm to anyone, he lamented the fact that it had ever begun.

In the midst of all these events, he did not cease from the very beginning of his principate to assist the Church in her labours against the ungodly by means of the most just and merciful laws. For the heretic Valens, who favoured the Arians, had violently afflicted her. Theodosius, however, rejoiced more in being a member of the Church than in being the ruler of the world. He commanded that the statues of the heathen should be everywhere overthrown, well knowing that not even earthly rewards are placed in the power of demons, but in that of the true God.

And what could be more marvellous than the religious humility of Theodosius when he punished the abominable and grave crime of the Thessalonians? For, at the intercession of the bishops, he had promised to treat their offence leniently; but he was then compelled to take vengeance on the people by the tumult of certain persons close to him. Then, however, coerced by the discipline of the Church, he did penance with such humility that the people, as they prayed for him, were more ready to weep when they saw the imperial majesty thus brought low than they were to fear it when it was angered by their sin.⁵⁹

These deeds, and similar ones which it would take too long to recall, are the good works that Theodosius bore with him from this temporal life where the greatest of human attainment and exaltation is but smoke. The reward of these works is eternal felicity, which God gives only to those who are truly godly. All the other things of this life, be they great or small, such as the world itself, light, air, earth, water, fruits, the soul and body of man himself, sensation, mind, life: all these things he bestows upon good and evil men alike. And among these things is imperial sway also, of whatever scope, which He dispenses according to His plan for the government of the ages.

Next, then, I see that we must answer those persons who, though they have been shown by the most manifest proofs that the multitude of false gods does not help foolish men to attain those temporal things which are all that they desire to possess, still strive, even

⁵⁹ The famous story of the submission of Theodosius to St Ambrose is at Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.*, 5,17; Sozomen, *Hist. eccl.*, 7,25,316f; Paulinus, *Vita sanct. Ambros.*, 24. See also Ambrose, *Epist.* 51.

when so confuted and convicted, to assert that such gods are to be worshipped not for any benefit in this present life, but for the sake of the life which is to come after death. For I consider that I have already made an adequate reply in my first five books to those who wish to worship vain things for the love of this world, and who complain that they are not permitted to indulge their childish fancies. When I had published the first three of these books and they had come into the hands of many, I heard that certain men – although I do not know who – were preparing a written reply to them. Next, it was reported to me that they had already written it, but were seeking a time when they could publish it without peril. But I counsel these people not to desire that which is not expedient for them. For it is easy for anyone who does not wish to remain silent to suppose that he has answered me. What, after all, is more talkative than vanity? But even though it can shout louder than truth if it likes, this is not to say that vanity has the power of truth.

Rather, let them consider all things diligently, judging the matter, if they can, without party spirit. Then, they will see that our arguments can be more easily shaken than uprooted by their shameless babbling and, as it were, their satirical and clownish frivolity. Let them, then, keep their follies in check, and choose rather to be corrected by the prudent than praised by the impudent. For if they await a time not of freedom to speak the truth, but of licence to speak ill, then I hope that they may not be like a certain man of whom Cicero speaks, who was called happy because he was at liberty to sin: 'O wretched man, who has licence to do wrong!'⁶⁰ He who considers himself happy because he has licence to speak ill would be much happier if he were not allowed to speak at all. For, then, he might lay aside his empty boasting and, even at this time, engage to his heart's content in argument as one earnest for discussion, listening as he should to those with whom he is engaged in friendly debate, as they answer him honestly, gravely and freely, to the best of their ability.

⁶⁰ *Tusc. disp.*, 5, 19, 55.

Book VI

Preface

It seems to me, then, that, in the five preceding books, I have now argued sufficiently against those who believe that many false gods are to be worshipped for the sake of this mortal life and earthly things. They believe that they are to be worshipped by means of that ritual and service which the Greeks call *latreia*, and which is due only to the one true God. But Christian truth has shown these gods to be either useless images or unclean spirits and malignant demons: created beings, at any rate, and not the Creator.

But who does not know that neither these five books, nor any other number whatsoever, can be enough to overcome the great stupidity and obstinacy of our adversaries? For it is esteemed the glory of vanity to concede nothing to the force of truth even when he who is dominated by so gross a fault perishes thereby. The disease remains unconquered despite all the industry of the physician, for the patient himself is incurable. There are, however, some who understand and carefully ponder what they read without any – or at least without any great and excessive degree – of the obstinacy of long-held error. These will be more ready to judge that I have done more than was required in the five books now completed than to think that I have discussed the question less thoroughly than necessity demanded. The ignorant strive to direct all their hatred against the Christian religion. They do this because of the disasters of this life and the destruction and changes which befall the things of this world; and learned men, possessed by mad impiety, do not even dissimulate such hatred but, against their own consciences, actually encourage it. But these more thoughtful readers will be unable to doubt that such hatred is entirely without rightful thought and reason, and is full of shallow temerity and most ruinous enmity.

I Of those who say that the gods are to be
worshipped not for the sake of this present life, but
for that of life eternal

Next, therefore, as the order that I have promised to follow requires, those persons are to be refuted and instructed who

contend that the gods of the nations, whom the Christian religion has overthrown, are to be worshipped not for the sake of this life, but for the sake of that which is to come after death. It is well, then, to begin my discussion with a truth-laden utterance taken from the holy psalm: 'Blessed is the man whose hope is the Lord God, and who respecteth not vanities and lying follies.'

In the midst of all vanities and lying follies, however, we may listen with a certain forbearance to those philosophers who are dissatisfied with the opinions and errors of the people: of the people who have set up images of their divine beings; who have invented many false and unworthy stories of those whom they called immortal gods; or who have believed the stories invented by others and, having believed them, incorporated them into their worship and sacred rites. For those philosophers, though they have not published their opinions freely, have nonetheless testified, even if only in murmured debates, that they deplore such things. Thus, it may not be wholly inappropriate to discuss with them the question of whether, for the sake of the life which is to come after death, we should worship not the one God who has made every creature, whether spiritual or corporeal, but the many gods who (as some of those same philosophers, and they more excellent and noble than the rest, have believed)² were made by Him and set on high by Him.

But as to those gods, some of whom I mentioned in the fourth book,³ to whom, each to each, his own little office is distributed: who could possibly say that we must assert and contend that these offer eternal life to anyone? There are most learned and acute men who rejoice in the great service that they have performed, because they have written books which teach men to know why each god should be supplicated and what is to be sought from each. They have done this lest, with a most shameful absurdity of the kind humorously displayed by the comic actor, water should be sought from Liber and wine from the Lymphs.⁴ But will these authors indeed assure any man who supplicates the immortal gods that, when he asks the Lymphs for wine and they reply, 'We have water;

¹ Psalm 40,4.

² Cf. e.g. Plato, *Timaeus*, 40.

³ Bk IV,8; 11; 21.

⁴ Cf. Bk IV,22. Virgil, *Ecl.*, 3,9.

ask Liber for wine', he may then rightly say, 'If you have no wine, at least give me eternal life'? What absurdity could be more monstrous? If they do not try to deceive him, like the demons they are, will not these Lymphs laugh at him? It is, after all, always very easy to make them laugh.⁵ Will they not answer the suppliant: 'O man, do you suppose that we have power over life [*vitam*] when you have heard that we do not even have power over wine [*vitem*]?'

It is, therefore, a most shameless folly to ask or hope for eternal life from such gods. For each of them is said to have charge of only a minute portion of this most sorrowful and brief life and of those things which assist and sustain it. If anyone seeks of one god something which is under the tutelage and power of another, this is so incongruous and absurd that it seems like a joke from the mimes. When this is done knowingly by comic actors, it is deservedly laughed at in the theatres. But when it is done in ignorance by fools, it is even more deservedly laughed at in the world. It is for this reason that, with respect to the gods established by cities, learned men have carefully investigated the question of which god or goddess is to be supplicated for each thing, and transmitted their findings to posterity. They tell us what is to be sought from Liber, for example, or what from the Lymphs, or what from Vulcan, and so on with all the rest. I mentioned some of these gods in the fourth book, and some of them I thought it better to omit. But if it is a mistake to ask wine from Ceres, bread from Liber, water from Vulcan and fire from the Lymphs, how much more ridiculous ought it to be thought to beseech any of these gods for eternal life!

When we were enquiring which of the gods or goddesses are to be believed capable of conferring earthly dominion upon men, it was shown, when all aspects of the matter had been discussed, that it is very far from correct to suppose that even earthly kingdoms are established by any of those many false deities. Is it not, therefore, the most insane impiety to believe that eternal life, which is beyond doubt or comparison to be preferred to all earthly kingdoms, can be given to anyone by any of these gods? Moreover, when we concluded that such gods are unable to grant earthly dominion, this was not because they were thought to be so great and exalted that, in their great sublimity, they did not deign to be concerned with so

⁵ Virgil, *Ed.*, 3,9.

small and abject a gift. On the contrary, it was because those gods have shown themselves utterly unworthy to be entrusted with the granting and preserving of even the toppling pinnacles of earthly rule, which we so rightly despise when we consider the frailty of human life. If, then (as the last two books have taught, in treating of this matter), no god out of all that host of either the plebeian gods, as it were, or the noble ones, is fit to give mortal kingdoms to mortals, how much less could any such god make immortal beings out of mortals?

We are, then, here dealing with those who believe that the gods should be worshipped not for the sake of this life, but for the sake of that which is to come after death. For it is at any rate now clear that those gods are not to be worshipped in the hope of obtaining the advantages of this mortal life attributed to their power by those who contend that they should be worshipped in order to secure such things. The latter speak not from any consideration of truth, but out of vain opinion. But I have already argued the case against them to the best of my ability in the five preceding books.

Quite apart from all this, however, let us suppose it true that those who worship the goddess Juventas flourish to a remarkable degree, whereas those who despise her either die within the years of youth or, even in those years, grow cold as with the sluggishness of age. Or let us suppose it true that Fortuna Barbata covers the cheeks of those who worship her with a handsome and graceful beard, while we see that those who spurn her are beardless or ill-bearded. Even so, we should still be entirely right to say that, though the power of each of these goddesses may extend as far as it does, each of them is nonetheless limited in some way to her own sphere of competence. Therefore, it is useless to seek eternal life of Juventas, a goddess who cannot even give a beard, or to hope for any good after this life from Fortuna Barbata, who, even in this life, cannot bestow the age itself at which a beard grows.

In truth, however, it is not necessary to worship these goddesses even for the sake of those things which are thought to be subject to them. Many worshippers of Juventas have not been at all vigorous in their youth, and many who do not worship her rejoice in youthful robustness notwithstanding. So too, many votaries of Fortuna Barbata have not been able to acquire a beard, or can grow only an ill-formed one. And those who venerate her for the sake of growing

a beard are laughed at by those with beards who despise her. Is the human heart really so foolish, then, as to believe that the worship of such divine beings will bear the fruit of eternal life? Can anyone believe this when he knows that their worship is empty and laughable even when it seeks to obtain only the temporal and most trivial rewards over each of which one of those divine beings is said to preside? Those who divided up temporal tasks between the gods did so because they wished to encourage the foolish populace to worship them. Thus, they distributed such tasks between them in a division so minute that none of them, even if they were assumed to be very numerous, should sit idle. Not even these men, however, have dared to say that the gods can grant eternal life.

2 What we are to believe that Varro thought of the gods of the nations, whose nature and rites he depicted in such a way that it would have been more reverent to have remained entirely silent concerning them

Who has enquired into these matters with more curiosity than Marcus Varro? Who has considered them more attentively? Who has distinguished them more minutely? Who has written on the subject more diligently and fully? Although he is not so polished in his eloquence, he is nonetheless so full of erudition and wisdom that, in the whole field of learning which we call secular and our adversaries call liberal, he can teach the student of things as much as Cicero can delight the student of words. Indeed, Cicero himself pays him a great compliment in his *Academica*. He says that he had engaged in discussion on the subject of that work with Marcus Varro, 'Of all men easily the most acute and, beyond doubt, the most learned.'⁶ He does not say 'the most eloquent' or 'the most fluent', for Varro is indeed very deficient in this respect. He does, however, say, 'of all men easily the most acute'. And he adds in these books – that is, in the *Academica*, where he contends that all things are doubtful – 'beyond doubt the most learned'. So certain was he of this, then, that he laid aside that doubt which it was his habit to apply to all things. It is as if, in this one respect, he had

⁶ Not extant; but see *Acad. post.*, 1,1

forgotten that he was an Academic, even though he was about to argue in favour of Academic doubt. And in the first book, where he commends the literary works of this same Varro, he says:

When we were wandering and roaming like strangers in our own city, it was as though your books led us back to our home, so that we could at last know who we were and where we were. You have opened up for us the age of our fatherland, the phases of its history, its sacred laws, its priesthoods, the discipline of its domestic and public life, the arrangement of its regions and places, and the names, kinds, offices and causes of all things divine and human.⁷

This, then, was a man of outstanding and excellent parts. Terentianus cogently describes him in a most elegant line of verse: 'Varro, a man of learning drawn from every source.'⁸ He read so much that we wonder at it that he had leisure to write anything. He wrote so much that we can hardly believe that anyone has been able to read it all. But if this man, I say, of such great gifts and learning, had intended to be the opponent and destroyer of the so-called divine things of which he wrote, and had said that they belong not to religion, but to superstition, I wonder if he would even then have written so many things worthy to be laughed at, condemned or detested? Yet he worshipped those same gods. Indeed, he esteemed their worship so highly that, in that same literary work, he says that he was afraid lest they should perish not by the assault of an enemy, but by the neglect of the citizens. He says that, in rescuing them from this ruin, and in laying them up and preserving them in the memory of good men by means of his books, he is performing a service more beneficial than that of Metellus, who saved the holy things of Vesta from the fire, and of Aeneas, who rescued his household gods from the fall of Troy.⁹ Yet he presents to the world things to be read which wise and foolish men alike might rightly condemn as completely inimical to the truth of religion. What ought we to think, then? Surely, we should conclude that, on the one hand, here is a most acute and learned man (not, however, one set free by the Holy Spirit) who has submitted to the customs and laws of his city.

⁷ *Acad. post.*, 1,3,9.

⁸ *De metris*, 2846.

⁹ Virgil, *Aen.*, 2,717; 747f.

On the other hand, however, we may suspect that he did not wish to remain silent as to those things which disturbed him, and so spoke of them under the guise of commending religion.

3 The division of Varro's *Antiquities* into 'Things Human' and 'Things Divine'

Varro wrote forty-one books of *Antiquities*, and he divided these into 'Things Human' and 'Things Divine', assigning twenty-five books to the former category and sixteen to the latter. The principle of arrangement which he followed was to divide the section treating of things human into four parts of six books each, dealing with the persons who act, where they act, when they act, and how they act. In the first six, then, he wrote of men; in the next six, of places; in the third six, of times; and in the fourth and last six, of things. Four times six, however, are twenty-four; but he placed at the head of them one single book in which he spoke of all these things generally. Again, in the treatment of things divine, the same method of division is followed with respect to those things which are performed in honour of the gods. For certain sacred rites are performed by men, in certain places, and at certain times. He embraced these four things that I have mentioned in three books each. In the first three he wrote of men; in the following three of places; in the third of times; and in the fourth of the sacred rites themselves. Thus he dealt, with most subtle discrimination, with those who perform, where they perform, when they perform and what they perform.

But because it was proper to speak also of those for whom these things are performed, and because it was particularly expected that he would do so, he also wrote a final set of three books concerning the gods themselves. Five times three are fifteen; but, as we have said, his books on 'Things Divine' come to sixteen in all. For, here again, he added a single book at the beginning, speaking by way of introduction to all that was to follow. When he had finished this, he again adopted a fivefold scheme of division. Of the first three books, which deal with men, the first subdivision deals with the pontiffs, the second with the augurs, and the third with the quindecimvirs. Of the second three, which deal with places, he speaks in one of them of shrines, in another of sacred temples, and in the third of religious places. The three following books deal with times,

that is, with festivals; and one of these deals with holy days, another with the games of the circus, and the third with theatrical performances. The fourth set of three books deals with sacred rites; and, here, he devotes one book to consecrations, one to private rites, and the final one to public rites. In the three which remain, following, as it were, this parade of obsequies, come the gods themselves, for whom all this care has been expended. First come the 'certain gods'; then the 'uncertain gods',¹⁰ and, third and last of all, the 'principal and select gods'.¹¹

4 From Varro's account, it appears that the worshippers of the gods regard things human as more ancient than things divine

But in this whole series of distributions and distinctions, most beautifully and subtly contrived, it is vain to seek eternal life. That it is most impudent to desire to find it there will easily appear, from what I have already said, and from what I shall say next, to any man who has not, in the hardness of his heart, become an enemy to himself. For these institutions are the work of either men or demons; nor are those demons of the kind that our adversaries call good. Rather, to speak more plainly, they are unclean spirits, malign beyond controversy. With wondrous malice, they secretly insert noxious opinions into the minds of the ungodly, so that the human mind may grow more and more vain and so become unable to grasp and cling to the immutable and eternal truth. And sometimes they do this openly, confirming these opinions by such false evidence as they have power to produce.

Varro himself attests that he wrote of human things first, and only then of things divine, because cities came into existence first and divine things were instituted by them subsequently. The true religion, however, was not instituted by any earthly city. On the contrary, it was itself clearly the founder of a Heavenly City, which is indeed inspired and taught by the true God, Who is the giver of eternal life to His true worshippers.

¹⁰ Cf. Bk III, 12; Acts 27, 23.

¹¹ Cf. Bk VII, 2.

When Varro confesses, then, that he wrote of human things first and then of things divine because these divine things were instituted by men, he gives this as his reason: 'Just as the painter exists before the picture and the builder before the building, so do cities precede the things instituted by cities.' But he says that, if he had been writing about 'the whole nature of the gods', he would have written of the gods first and of men subsequently. It is as if he were here writing of some part of the nature of the gods and not of the whole; or, again, as if there were some part of the nature of the gods which should not be written of before men, though not the whole. But how is it that, in those three last books, where he diligently explains the 'certain', 'uncertain' and 'select' gods, he then seems to omit no part of the nature of the gods? Why does he say, 'If we had been writing of the whole nature of the gods and of men, we should have dealt fully with things divine before touching upon things human'? For he is writing of either the whole nature of the gods, or some part, or no part at all. If of the whole, then certainly this is to be placed before things human; but if of some part, why should this part not also take precedence over things human? Or is there some part of the gods which is unworthy to be preferred to the whole nature of mankind? But even if it is too much for some part of the divine to be preferred to the whole of things human, that part is, surely, at least worthy to be preferred to things Roman. For in his books on things human Varro writes not of the whole world, but only of that part of it which belongs to Rome. Yet he said that he had properly placed those books before the ones dealing with things divine in his order of writing, just as the painter comes before the picture, and the builder before the building. Thus, he confesses most plainly that even these divine things, like a picture or like a structure, were instituted by men. It remains for us to understand, therefore, that he was not writing of the nature of any existing gods at all, and that, because he did not wish to say so plainly, he left this to be inferred by the intelligent. For when he says that he was not writing about 'the whole', usage understands this to mean that he was writing about 'some part'. But he can also be understood to mean 'none'; for 'none' is neither 'the whole' nor 'some part'. For, as he himself says, if he were writing of the whole nature of the gods, its proper place in the order of writing would have been before things human. In any case, as the truth declares, even though Varro

is silent, his treatment of the divine nature should certainly have been placed before things Roman even if he was dealing not with the whole, but only with some part of it. But if he is right to put it last, he therefore writes of what is not divine at all.

In what he wrote, therefore, it is not that Varro wished to assign to things human a priority over things divine; rather, he chose not to give precedence to things false over things true. For in what he wrote of human affairs, he followed the annals of recorded history; but when he wrote of the things that he calls divine, upon what was this based but vain opinion? And this, no doubt, is what, in a veiled manner, he wished to signify, not only by writing of things divine after things human, but also by giving a reason for doing so. If he had remained silent as to his reason, some persons might perhaps have defended his method on various grounds. By giving an account of his reason as he did, however, he left nothing for others to guess at as they like: he gave proof enough that he places men before the institutions of men, not the nature of men before the nature of the gods. Thus, he has confessed that, when he wrote his books on things divine, he did not write concerning the truth which belongs to nature, but the falsehood that belongs to error. And, as I have mentioned in the fourth book,¹² he has expressed this more clearly elsewhere. For he says that, if he were himself founding a new city, he would have written according to the rule of nature, but since he found himself to be a member of an old one, he could do nothing but follow its custom.

5 Of the three kinds of theology according to Varro:
that is, first, the mythical; second, the natural; and,
third, the civil

Next, what does he mean when he says that there are three kinds of theology: that is, of accounts given of the gods? Of these, he calls one mythical, another physical, and the third civil.¹³ If Latin usage permitted, we should call the kind which he placed first 'fabular'; but let us call it 'fabulous', for the word 'mythical' is derived from *mythos*, which means 'fable' in Greek. That the second kind should

¹² Bk IV, 31.

¹³ Cf. Scaevola's distinction at Bk IV, 27.

be called 'natural' the custom of speech now admits; and he has himself given a Latin name to the third, which he calls 'civil'. Then he says: 'They call that kind of theology mythical which is especially used by the poets; the physical is that which the philosophers use; and the civil, that which the people use. As to the first kind of which I have spoken', he says,

there are in it many falsehoods which are contrary to the dignity and nature of immortal beings. For we find in it that one god has been born from the head, another from the thigh, another from drops of blood; and, again, that gods have been thieves, adulterers or the servants of men. In short, in this theology all the things are attributed to the gods that can befall not merely a man, but even the most contemptible of men.

Herc, certainly – where he could, where he dared, where he thought he could do so with impunity – Varro expressed without any of the mists of ambiguity how great an injury is done to the nature of the gods by such lying fables. For he was speaking not of natural theology nor of civil, but of the mythical, which he thought he could freely condemn.

Let us see what he says of the second kind. 'The second kind that I have indicated', he says,

is that concerning which the philosophers have left many books. In them, they discuss what gods there are, where they are, of what kind they are, of what quality, for how long they have existed, whether they have always existed, whether they are made of fire, as Heraclitus believes, or of numbers, as Pythagoras thinks, or of atoms, as Epicurus says. And there are other things which the ears can more easily endure inside the walls of a school than outside in the forum.

He finds nothing to condemn in this kind of theology, which they call physical and which pertains to the philosophers. He merely notes their controversies with one another, by which a multitude of quarrelling sects has been created. He removed this kind of theology from the forum, however, that is, from the people, and enclosed it behind the walls of the school; yet he did not remove that first kind of theology, so mendacious and wicked, from the cities! Oh, the religious ears of the peoples, and among them even those of the Romans! They cannot bear to hear what the philosophers say when

they discuss immortal beings. But when the poets sing and the actors perform tales which are against the dignity and nature of immortal beings – things which may befall ‘not merely a man, but even the most contemptible of men’: these they not only hear, but hear gladly! And not only this, but they have decided that such tales are pleasing to the gods themselves, and that the gods are to be propitiated by means of them.

But someone will say, ‘Let us distinguish these two kinds of theology, the mythical and the physical, that is, the fabulous and the natural, from the civil religion with which we are now dealing, just as Varro himself has distinguished them; and let us see what account he gives of the civil religion.’ I see, indeed, why the mythical theology should be distinguished from the civil: because the former is false, vile and unworthy. But to distinguish the natural from the civil: what else is this but to confess that the civil theology itself is a lie? For if the other theology is natural, what is there in it worthy of blame, that it should be excluded? But if the theology called civil is not natural, what merit has it that it should be admitted? This, in truth, is the reason why Varro wrote of things human first and of things divine afterwards: because in treating of things divine he did not follow nature, but the institutions of men.

Let us, however, examine the civil theology also. ‘The third kind’, he says, ‘is that which the citizens in their towns, and especially the priests, should know and administer. In this kind is contained the knowledge of which gods are to be worshipped publicly, and what rites and sacrifices are appropriate to each.’ Let us attend also to what follows. ‘The first theology’, he says, ‘is especially adapted to the theatre, the second to the world, and the third to the city’. Who does not see to which he gives the palm? Surely it is to the second, which, as he has said already, is the province of the philosophers. This, he attests, pertains to the world, than which the philosophers suppose there to be nothing better.¹⁴ But as to the other two theologies, the first and the third – that is, the theatrical and the civil: has he separated these or united them? For though we see that cities are in the world, we do not see that it follows that what belongs to the city can belong also to the world. For, thanks to false opinion, it can come about that things are

¹⁴ Cf. Cicero, *De nat. deor.*, 2,7; 2,14,37ff.

believed in and worshipped in the city which do not in fact exist anywhere, either in the world or outside it. But where is the theatre, if not in the city? For what purpose was it established, if not for theatrical displays? And where do such theatrical performances belong if not among the divine things which Varro describes with such skill in his books?

6 Of the mythical – that is, the fabulous – theology, and the civil, against Varro

O Marcus Varro, you are without doubt the most acute and learned of men. But you are still a man and not a god, and you have not been raised up into truth and freedom by the Spirit of God, to see and proclaim things divine. You do indeed perceive that things divine are to be set apart from the follies and lies of men. But you are afraid to speak out against the most vicious beliefs of the people and their customary expression in public superstitions: superstitions which – as you yourself see, when you consider the matter from all sides, and as all that you write proclaims – are abhorrent to the nature of the gods. They are abhorrent to the nature even of such gods as the human mind in its infirmity supposes to exist in the elements of this world. But what can human ingenuity, however outstanding, do here? In such straits, how can human learning, however manifold and profound, assist you? You desire to worship the natural gods; you are compelled to worship the civil. You have discovered other, mythical, gods, upon whom you very freely vomit forth what you think; but you thereby spatter the civil gods also, whether you wish to or not. You say, indeed, that the mythical gods are adapted to the theatre, the natural ones to the world, and the civil to the city. But the world is a divine work, whereas cities and theatres are works of men; and the gods laughed at in the theatres are none other than those who are adored in the temples; and those to whom you exhibit games are none other than those to whom you sacrifice victims. How much more honestly and perceptively would you have classified them if you had said that some gods are natural whereas others are instituted by men, and that, of those so instituted, the writings of the poets give one account and that of the priests another. But both poets and priests are so united with one

another in a fellowship of falsehood that both are pleasing to the demons, to whom true doctrine is hateful.

Leaving aside, then, until a little later, the theology that they call natural, which we must discuss presently, is anyone really content to ask or hope for eternal life from the gods of poets and theatres, games and plays? God forbid! Rather, may the true God turn aside from us such wild and sacrilegious madness! What? Are we to ask eternal life from gods who are pleased by games and plays, and who are placated by these things when their crimes are represented in them? No one, I suppose, is so insane as to cast himself into the abyss of such furious blasphemy. So, then: neither by mythical nor by civil theology does anyone attain eternal life. The former sows by devising wicked stories about the gods; the latter reaps by approving them. The one broadcasts lies; the other garners them. The one associates things divine with false crimes; and the other includes among things divine the plays that portray those crimes. The one causes wicked fictions concerning the gods to resound in the songs of men; the other consecrates them for the festivities of the gods themselves. The one sings of the crimes and disgraceful acts of the divine beings; the other loves them. The one announces or invents them; the other either testifies to their truth or takes delight in them even though they are false. Both kinds of theology are vile, and both are damnable; but one, that of the theatre, makes public profession of its wickedness, while the other, that of the city, makes that wickedness its adornment. Are we to hope for eternal life from that which pollutes even this brief and temporal life? Does not the company of wicked men pollute our life if they insinuate themselves into our affections and win our assent? And does not the society of demons, who are worshipped by means of their own crimes, pollute our life even more? If the crimes are true, how wicked are the demons! If the crimes are false, how wicked is the worship!

When we say these things, it may perhaps seem to someone who knows little of such matters that the only things which are unworthy of the divine majesty, and too ridiculous or detestable to be celebrated, are those things concerning the gods which are sung in the verses of the poets and enacted in the theatrical displays. On the other hand, it may seem that what is done by priests and not by actors is pure and free from all shame. If this were so, however, no

one would ever have thought that these shameful displays should be celebrated in honour of the gods in the first place, and the gods themselves would never have required that they be exhibited to them. But men are in no way ashamed to perform such things in the theatres in honour of the gods, precisely because similar things are done in the temples.

Finally: when our distinguished author was endeavouring to distinguish the civil theology from the mythical and the natural, as being a third and distinct kind, he wished us to understand that it is rather conditioned by both than separated from either. For he says that the writings of the poets are less than the people ought to follow, whereas those of the philosophers are more than it is profitable for plain folk to investigate. 'These things', he says, 'differ in such a way that not a few elements of both of them have been adopted into the civil theology. We shall, then, describe what the civil theology has in common with each of the others, as well as what is peculiar to itself; but we must keep company more with the philosophers than with the poets.' The civil theology is therefore not wholly separate from that of the philosophers. Elsewhere, however, when speaking of the genealogies of the gods, he says that the people are more inclined to believe the poets than the natural philosophers. In the former place, he speaks of what ought to be done; in the latter, of what is done. He says that the natural philosophers had written for the sake of utility, and the poets for amusement. Thus, the things from the poets' writings which the people ought not to follow are the crimes of the gods: which, nonetheless, amuse both the people and the gods. As he says, the poets write for the sake of amusement, not utility. Nevertheless, they write of such things as the gods desire and the people perform for them.

7 Of the similarity and harmony of the mythical and civil theologies

The mythical theology, then – that of the theatrical performances, full of unworthiness and vileness – is referred back to the civil: the whole of the mythical theology, rightly judged worthy of condemnation and rejection, is a part of the civil theology, which is deemed worthy to be cultivated and observed! And it is not, as I have tried to show, an incongruous part, foreign to the body as a whole and

connected and fastened to it inappropriately. Rather, it is entirely consonant with it and most aptly joined to it, like a limb of the same body. Is this not clearly shown by the statues representing the form, age, sex and appearance of the gods? The poets have Jupiter with a beard and Mercury without a beard; but do not the pontiffs have the same? Do not the actors and priests alike represent Priapus as having enormous private parts? When he stands still to be adored in the sacred places, is he different from when he runs about in the theatre to be laughed at? Saturn is old and Apollo young when they are represented by actors; are they not just as much so in the statues which stand in the shrines? Why are Forculus, who presides over the doors, and Limentinus, who guards the threshold, male gods, while Cardea, who keeps the hinge, a female? Are these things, which grave poets have found unworthy to be included in their verses, not found in books which deal with divine things? Diana of the theatre bears arms; is Diana of the city a simple maiden? The Apollo of the stage is a performer on the harp; does the god of Delphi lack that art?

But these things are honourable compared with the baseness of some of the others. What conception of Jupiter did those persons have who placed his nurse Amalthea in the Capitol?¹⁵ Did they not confirm the view of Euhemerus, who wrote not with the imprecision of a storyteller, but as a diligent historian, that all such gods were originally men and mortals? And those who placed the gods called *Epulones* as parasites at the table of Jupiter: what did they desire, if not to make fun of the sacred rites?¹⁶ For if a comic actor had said that Jupiter's parasites were employed at his banquets, he would certainly have seemed to be seeking to provoke laughter. But Varro said it! – and he said it not while mocking the gods, but commending them! This is attested by the fact that he wrote this in his books on things divine, not on things human; and not where he was describing the theatrical displays, but where he was explaining the laws of the Capitoline temple. In short, he is conquered, and forced to confess that, just as men made the gods in

¹⁵ Ovid, *Fast.*, 5, 115ff.

¹⁶ It is not known what Augustine means by this. According to Cicero, the *Epulones* were not gods, but a college of priests who had charge of the sacrificial feasts (*De orat.*, 3, 73). But see also Valerius Maximus, 2, 12, for the feast called *epulum Iovis*, which Augustine may here have in mind.

human form, so have they believed that the gods love the same pleasures as human beings.

Nor, indeed, did the malign spirits neglect their task of deluding the minds of men and thus confirming these noxious opinions. Hence the tale of the custodian of the temple of Hercules who, at leisure and having nothing else to do, was playing dice with himself, one hand against the other. One hand represented Hercules and the other himself, and the understanding was that, if he won, he would use the temple funds to buy himself dinner and hire a whore, whereas, if victory went to Hercules, he would provide the same amount out of his own funds for the entertainment of Hercules. Then, when he was beaten by himself as though by Hercules, he gave to the god Hercules the dinner that he owed him and a very well-known prostitute, Larentina. She fell asleep in the temple and dreamed that Hercules had intercourse with her. He told her that she would receive her fee from the first young man whom she should meet as she left, and that she should believe this to have been paid to her by Hercules. The first person to meet her as she went out was a very wealthy young man called Tarutius. He loved her for many years; and, when he died, he left his property to her. Having in this way acquired a most ample fortune, and not wishing to seem ungrateful for a divine reward, she did what she believed would be most acceptable to the divine beings, and made the Roman people itself her heir. When she passed away, the will was found; and they say that, by such meritorious conduct, she gained divine honours.¹⁷

If the poets were to invent stories of this kind, and if actors were to portray them, they would beyond doubt be said to belong to the mythical theology, and would be judged worthy to be segregated from the dignity of the civil theology. But these shameful things are reported by so great a scholar as Varro as pertaining not to the poets, but to the people; not to actors, but to sacred things; not to theatres, but to the temples: not, that is, to the mythical theology, but to the civil. The actors do not fail to portray even the most ignoble acts of the gods by means of their comic art; but, clearly, the priests fail when, in their purportedly sacred rites, they endeavour to portray the gods as having an honour which does not exist.

¹⁷ Cf. Plutarch, *Quaest. Rom.*, 36; Aulus Gellius, *Noct. Att.*, 6,7.

There are the sacred rites of Juno, and these are celebrated on her beloved island of Samos,¹⁸ where she was given in marriage to Jupiter. There are the rites of Ceres, where Proserpine, carried off by Pluto, is sought. There are the rites of Venus where her lover, the handsome youth Adonis, is lamented as slain by a boar's tusk. There are the rites of the Mother of the gods where the beautiful youth Attis, loved by her and castrated because of a woman's jealousy, is mourned by those unfortunate men called Galli who are also castrated.¹⁹ Since these things are more hideous than all the filth of the stage, why is it that men strive to separate the fables concerning the gods which the poets invent – that is, those things which belong to the theatre – from those things which they wish to say belong to the city, as though they were separating unworthy and base things from things honourable and worthy? Indeed, we have more reason to thank the actors who have spared the eyes of men, and have not laid bare in public spectacles all the things which are hidden within the temple walls.

And if those sacred rites which are brought out into the light are so detestable, what good is to be attributed to those which are shrouded in darkness? The rites which are enacted by castrated and effeminate men are indeed performed in secret; but our adversaries have certainly not been able to conceal the men themselves, so miserably emasculated and corrupted. Let them persuade whomever they can that some sacred act is being performed through the agency of such men, who, as they cannot deny, are deemed to be holy and occupied with sacred business. We do not know what they do; but we know by whom such things are done. And we know what things are enacted on the stage. To be sure, no castrated or effeminate man has ever appeared there, even as one of a chorus of harlots. But, nevertheless, even those stage plays are performed by base and infamous persons; for, indeed, they ought not to be performed by honest men. What sacred rites are they, then, for the performance of which holiness has chosen such persons as not even the obscenity of the stage has admitted to its company?

¹⁸ Cf. Virgil, *Aen.*, 1, 15f.

¹⁹ Cf. Ovid, *Fast.*, 4, 223ff; Bk II, 7; Bk VII, 25.

8 Of the interpretations in terms of natural phenomena which learned pagans endeavour to put forward on behalf of their gods

But all these things, our adversaries say, have certain physical interpretations; that is, interpretations in terms of natural phenomena – as if in this discussion we were seeking physics rather than theology, which is an account not of nature, but of God. For although the true God is God not by opinion but by nature, nonetheless all nature is not God. For there is certainly a nature of man and beast and tree and stone, but none of these is God. If, however, when we discuss the rites of the Mother of the gods, the first premiss of the interpretation is that the Mother of the gods is the earth, why do we seek further? Why consider anything else? What gives clearer evidence in support of those who say that all those gods were once men? For if the earth is their mother, surely they are the sons of earth. In the true theology, however, the earth is the work of God, not His mother.

In whatever way their sacred rites may be interpreted and referred to natural things, however, it is not according to nature but against nature, that men should pose as women. Yet this morbidity, this crime, this indecency to which men of vicious morals will hardly confess under torture is included among those sacred rites. Again, if these rites, which are convicted of being more filthy than the indecencies of the theatre, are excused and made pure by interpretations which show that they signify things of nature, why are the fictions of the poets not similarly excused and purified? For many have interpreted these also in the same fashion. Some have gone so far as to explain the most frightful and abominable story that they tell, that of how Saturn devoured his children, by saying that the long duration of time, signified by the name Saturn, consumes all that it begets.²⁰ Or else, as the same Varro conjectures, that the name Saturn is related to the seeds which fall back once more into the earth from which they arise. Others give other explanations in this case; and so similarly with the rest of this theology.

Yet this theology is called mythical, and is reprehended, cast off and condemned, together with all such interpretations pertaining to

²⁰ Cf. Bk IV, 10.

it, not only by the natural theology, which belongs to the philosophers, but also by the civil theology with which we are dealing, which is asserted to belong to cities and peoples. And it has been judged worthy of repudiation because it has invented unworthy stories of the gods. This has come about, no doubt, because the most acute and learned men who have written on the subject understood that both theologies – that is, the mythical and the civil – ought to be condemned, but dared not condemn the latter, though they did the former. Thus, they proposed the former for blame, and they showed the latter to be very like it. This was done not in order that the latter might be chosen and held in preference to the former, but in order that it might be understood as worthy to be rejected with it, so that, when both of them had been brought into contempt, but without peril to those who feared to condemn the civil theology, that theology which they called natural might find its place in better minds. For the civil and the mythical theologies are both civil and both mythical. Both will be found to be mythical by anyone who prudently examines the vanities and obscenities of both. And both will be found to be civil by anyone who attends to the fact that the theatrical performances pertaining to the mythical theology are included in the festivals of the civic gods and in the divine rites of the cities.

How, then, can the power to give eternal life be attributed to any of those gods whose own images and ceremonies show how closely they resemble in form, age, sex, dress, marriages, generations and rites those mythical gods who are openly condemned? In all of these respects, it is understood either that they were once men, that sacred rites and solemnities have been instituted to honour the life and death of each of them, and that this error has been implanted and confirmed by demons; or that they are themselves most unclean spirits who have used every occasion to creep into men's minds and deceive them.

9 Of the offices of the individual gods.

What? Those *offices of the divine beings*, doled out so meanly and minutely, by reason of which, our adversaries say, each one of them ought to be supplicated for his own particular kind of service (we have already said much on this subject, although by no means all):

are not these more consistent with comic foolery than with divine dignity? If anyone should employ two nurses for an infant, one to give nothing but food to him and the other nothing but drink, as the Romans employed two goddesses for this purpose, Educa and Potina, he would certainly seem to be foolish, and to be behaving like a comic actor in his own home. They wish to say that Liber is so called from 'relieving' [*liberamentum*] because it is thanks to his good offices that men find relief through the ejaculation of semen when they have intercourse. And they say that same service is performed for women by Libera (whom they believe to be the same as Venus) when they also emit seed. And it is for this reason that they place an image of a certain part of the male body in the temple of Liber, and of the female in that of Libera. To these things, they add female attendants for Liber, and also wine, to excite lust. Thus, the Bacchanalia used to be celebrated with the greatest madness: so much so that Varro himself confesses that the Bacchantes could not have done such things had they not been deranged in mind. Subsequently, however, these things displeased a Senate composed of saner minds, and it commanded that they be abolished.²¹ In this instance, perhaps, they at last came to perceive how much power unclean spirits have over the minds of men when they are taken to be gods. Such things certainly could not be done in the theatres; for there, though men act out plays, they do not go mad (although to have gods who take delight in such plays is very like being mad).

Moreover, what of the distinction that Varro draws between the religious and the superstitious man? He says that a superstitious man fears the gods, whereas a religious man does not fear them like enemies, but venerates them like parents. He also says that the gods are so good that they are more ready to spare the guilty than harm the innocent. Yet he mentions that there are three gods employed to protect a woman after childbirth, lest the god Silvanus come in by night and distress her. To signify the presence of these guardians, three men go about the thresholds of the house at night, and they first smite the threshold with an axe, then with a pestle, and, third, they sweep it with a broom. Thanks to the display of these symbols of agriculture, the god Silvanus is prevented from coming in. For trees are not felled or pruned without iron tools; nor is grain

²¹ Livy, 39,18.

ground without a pestle; nor is the harvested grain heaped up without a broom. From these three things come the names of the three gods: Intercidona, from cutting with an axe [*intercisio*], Pilumnus, from the pestle [*pilum*], and Deverra, from the broom which is used to sweep [*deverrere*]. These were the three gods by whom the new mother was to be preserved from the power of the god Silvanus. So the protection of the good gods would not avail against the malice of a harmful one unless there were several of the former to one of the latter! Or unless the former fought to repulse the rough, horrid, uncultivated, forest-dwelling god with the symbols of agriculture which are, as it were, his enemies! Is this the innocence of the gods, then? Is this their concord? Are these the deities needed to secure the health of cities: deities more ridiculous than the things which are laughed at in the theatres?

When a man and a woman are united by the yoke [*iugum*] of marriage, the god Jugatinus is invoked. So far, so good. But the god Domiducus is then invoked to lead the bride home [*domum ducere*]. And the god Domitius is employed to install her in the house [*domum ire*]. The goddess Manturna is added, to ensure that she is to remain [*manere*] with her husband. What more is required? Let human modesty be spared: when a proper privacy has been secured, let the desires of flesh and blood run their course. Why fill the bedchamber with a swarm of deities when even the wedding attendants have departed? What is more, it is filled in this way not in order to secure a greater regard for modesty by the presence of the gods, but so that the woman, being of the weaker sex, and made bashful by novelty, may with their assistance surrender her virginity without any difficulty. For the goddess Virginensis is there, and the father-god Subigus, the mother-goddess Prema, the goddess Pertunda, and Venus, and Priapus. What is this? If, at any rate, the man, labouring at his task, needed to be helped by the gods, might not some one god or goddess have been sufficient? Would not Venus alone have been equal to the task? For her name is said to be derived from the fact that it is not without force [*vi non sine*] that a woman ceases to be a virgin. If there is any shame among men, even if there is none among the gods, why, when a newly married couple believe that so many gods of both sexes are present and viewing the proceedings, are they not so overcome with modesty that he is less aroused, and she made even more reluctant? And certainly, if the

goddess Virginensis is present to unfasten the virgin's girdle; and if the god Subigus is present to ensure her husband will be able to subdue [*subigere*] her successfully; and if the goddess Prema is there to press her down [*premere*] once she has submitted, so that she will not struggle – then what is the goddess Pertunda doing here? Let her blush and go forth; let the husband himself have something to do. It is surely dishonourable for any but him to do the act which is her name. But perhaps she is tolerated because she is a goddess and not a god. For if she were believed to be a male, and hence called Pertundus, the husband would require more assistance to defend his wife's chastity against him than the newly delivered woman does against the god Silvanus. But what am I saying? For Priapus is also there, and he is all too masculine. On his immense and most horrible phallus the newly married woman used to be required to sit, according to the most honourable and religious custom of the matrons!

Let the authors whom we are here considering go on and endeavour with all the subtlety they can to distinguish between the civil and the mythical theology. Let them, that is, distinguish between cities and theatres, temples and stages. Let them distinguish between the rites of the pontiffs and the songs of the poets as though they were distinguishing the honest from the base, the true from the false, the grave from the frivolous, the serious from the laughable, the desirable from the undesirable. We understand what they do. They know that the theatrical and mythical theology derives from the civil and is reflected, like an image of it in a mirror, by the songs of the poets. Thus, having expounded what they dare not condemn, they assault and condemn that image of it instead; and they do this so that those who understand their intention may themselves detest the very face itself of which the other is an image. The gods themselves, however, seeing their own face in the same mirror, as it were, take such delight in it that who and what they are is all the more clearly seen in both image and original. And, for this reason, they have with terrible commands compelled their worshippers to dedicate the indecencies of the mythical theology to them, to place these things among their solemn festivals, and to hold them up as things divine. In so doing, they show themselves all the more plainly to be unclean spirits. They have caused the theology of the theatre, which is abject and condemned, to be part

and parcel of the civil theology, which is chosen and approved, even though the whole of their theology is wicked and false, and contains within itself only imaginary gods. One part of it is contained in the writings of the priests, the other in the songs of the poets. Whether it also has other parts is another question. I think that I have now sufficiently shown, within the terms of Varro's classification, that the theology of the city and of the theatre both belong to the one civil theology. Hence, since both are similarly base, absurd, unworthy and false, God forbid that any truly religious man should hope for eternal life from either the one or the other.

Finally, it is Varro himself who recalls and enumerates the gods, beginning with a man's conception. Their number begins with Janus, goes on to the death of the aged man, and closes with the goddess Naenia, who is invoked with song at the funerals of the old. Varro then shows that there is another series of gods who do not pertain to man himself, but to the things which concern mankind, such as food and clothing and whatever else is necessary to this life. With regard to all of these, he shows what is the special task of each, and for the sake of what each of them ought to be petitioned. But in all this careful enquiry he never shows us or names any gods whom we should ask for eternal life – which is the one special reason why we are Christians.

Thus, when Varro so carefully expounds and reveals the civil theology, showing that it is similar to the unworthy and shameful mythical theology, and demonstrating also that the mythical theology is part of the civil, who is so stupid as not to understand that he is endeavouring to prepare a place in men's minds for the natural theology, which, he says, belongs to the philosophers? He does this in a subtle way, by so reprehending the mythical theology that, though he does not dare to reprehend the civil openly, he shows that the latter is reprehensible merely by expounding it. Thus, when both have been condemned by men of right understanding, the natural theology alone remains as worthy of choice. And with this subject I shall, with God's help, deal in its proper place.

10 Of the liberty of Seneca, who condemned the civil theology more vehemently than Varro did the mythical

But the freedom that Varro lacked when he did not dare openly to condemn the civil theology in the way that he did in the similar case of the theatrical was not lacking – or, at least, not entirely so – in Annaeus Seneca, who, as we learn from not a few sources, flourished in the time of our apostles. This freedom was present in his writings, even though it was not present in his life. For in the book that he composed against superstitions²² he condemns the civil and urban theology much more copiously and vehemently than Varro does the theatrical and mythical. For when he deals with images he says:

They dedicate to beings who are holy, immortal and inviolable images made of the most worthless and motionless matter. They give them the appearance of men or beasts or fish, or a mixture of both sexes, or different bodies combined. They are called divine beings; but if they should happen to receive breath and we were suddenly to encounter them, they would be called monsters.

Then, a little later, while commending the natural theology, and when he had summarised the views of certain philosophers, he puts a question to himself and says:

At this point, someone will say, 'Am I to believe that the heaven and the earth are gods, and that some are above the moon and others below it? Am I to listen to Plato or to Strabo the Peripatetic, one of whom has it that God is without a body and the other that He is without a soul?'²³

And he answers as follows:

What, then, finally? Do the dreams of Titus Tatius or Romulus or Tullus Hostilius seem to you any truer? Cloacina was consecrated as a goddess by Tatius, and Picus and Tiberinus by Romulus, while Hostilius made gods of Panic and Pallor, the most ignoble passions of mankind: one of which is the motion

²² This work is not extant; cf. Tertullian, *Apol.*, 12.

²³ Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 86A; Cicero, *De nat. deor.*, 1, 13, 35.

of a frightened mind and the other not even a disease, but a colour. Would you rather believe that these are divine beings, and receive them into heaven?

And how outspoken he is when he writes of the cruel and shameful rites themselves! 'One man', he says,

cuts off his male organs; another slashes his arms. What can they fear from the gods when angry if they use such means to win their favour when propitious? But gods who wish to be worshipped in this way do not deserve to be worshipped at all. So great is the fury of a mind disordered and driven from its seat that it employs means to placate the gods which have never been used even by those men of the most abominable ferocity whose cruelty is embodied in fable. Tyrants have mutilated the limbs of some of their subjects, but they have never required anyone to mutilate his own. Some men have been castrated to serve the lust of a king; but no man has done this to himself, with his own hands, at a lord's command. They slash themselves in the temples and make supplication with their own wounds and blood. If anyone has leisure to investigate what such men do and what they suffer, he will find things that are so indecent for men of honour, so unworthy of free men, so unlike those of sane men that, if their number were fewer, no one would doubt that they were mad. Now, however, the number of the insane is the defence of their sanity.

Next, Seneca calls to mind those things which are customarily done in the Capitol; and here, with great frankness, he argues that no one would believe that such things could be done other than by fools or madmen. In the rites of the Egyptians, the loss of Osiris is first mourned and then, shortly thereafter, his reappearance is celebrated with great joy. Though both his loss and his recovery are fictitious, the sorrow and joy of men who have lost nothing and found nothing are nonetheless expressed as though they were real. 'But there is', he says,

a fixed time for this madness, and it is tolerable to go mad once a year. Go to the Capitol, however, and you will be ashamed of the folly there made public and of the offices which a deluded madness has assigned to itself. One man is telling Jupiter the names of his votaries; another announces the hours; another is his bather; another his anointer: that is, with empty

gestures of his arms he imitates the act of anointing. There are women who arrange the hair of Juno and Minerva – even though, as they move their fingers after the fashion of hair-dressers, they are standing far away not only from the images of the goddesses, but even from the temple. There are some women who hold a mirror. There are men who call upon the gods to stand bail for them, and some who hold up documents to them and explain their case. A celebrated principal comic actor, but by then a broken down old man, used to act out a mime each day in the Capitol – as though the gods would take pleasure in viewing that for which men had ceased to care. Every kind of artisan sits there to devote himself to the immortal gods.

A little further on he continues:

But these men, even though the service which they offer to the gods is useless, at least do nothing wicked or infamous. There are women, however, who sit in the Capitol and believe that Jupiter is their lover. These do not fear even the glare of Juno, who is, if you wish to believe the poets, much given to anger.

Varro did not have the freedom to speak thus. He dared to condemn only the poetic theology, and not the civil, which Seneca hacks to pieces. But if we attend to the truth of the matter, temples in which such rites are performed in reality are worse than theatres in which they are feigned. And so, as regards these rites of the civil theology, Seneca would rather see the wise man adopt the course of excluding them from his private religion while feigning respect for them in his actions. For he says: 'The wise man will observe all these things as commanded by the laws, but not as pleasing to the gods.' And a little later he asks:

If we even join divine beings in a marriage, and no very holy one, between brother and sister, what of it? We marry Bellona to Mars, Venus to Vulcan, and Salacia to Neptune. Some, however, we leave celibate, as if no match could be arranged for them. Then again, some of them are widows, such as Populonia, Fulgora and the goddess Rumina; but it is no wonder that these should lack a suitor. As for all that ignoble swarm of gods which has been assembled by the long age of ancient superstition: let us adore these,

he says, 'but let us also remember that that their worship is more a matter of formality than of reality'.

On this view, therefore, neither law nor custom established anything in the civil theology which either pleased the gods or pertained to reality. But though Seneca was, as it were, made free by philosophy, yet, because he was a distinguished senator of the Roman people, he nonetheless worshipped what he condemned, did what he deplored, and adored what he blamed. Philosophy, clearly, had taught him something great: not to be superstitious in the world, but to do in the temple what he certainly would not do in the theatre. It had taught him to imitate the part of an actor for the sake of the laws of cities and the customs of mankind. This was all the more damnable in that he acted out his lying part in such a way that the people deemed him to be acting truthfully. An actor, at least, would rather amuse the people by playing than deceive them by cheating.

II What Seneca thought of the Jews

Among the other superstitions of civil theology, Seneca also condemns the religious practices of the Jews, and especially the Sabbath. He affirms that it is to their disadvantage to introduce one day of rest into every seven, because they thereby lose almost a seventh of their life in inactivity, and also because they have suffered much loss by failing to act in times of emergency. He ventures to mention the Christians, who were then already very hostile to the Jews, only in neutral terms, for fear of praising them against the ancient traditions of his fatherland, or, perhaps, of condemning them against his own will. It is in speaking of the Jews that he says: 'Meanwhile, the customs of this most accursed race have achieved such strength that they are now received in all lands: the conquered have given laws to the conquerors.' He shows surprise when he speaks thus, because he was ignorant of what was being wrought by divine providence. But he then adds a statement which indicates more clearly what he thought of the nature of the religious practices of the Jews: 'The Jews, however, understand the origins of their rites, whereas the greater part of the Roman people do not know why they perform theirs.'

But as to why, or to what extent, the religious institutions of the Jews were established by divine authority and then, in the fullness of time, and by that same authority, taken over by the people of

God to whom the mystery of eternal life has been revealed: these are matters of which I have spoken elsewhere, especially when arguing against the Manichaeans.²⁴ They must be spoken of again in this work, in a more suitable place.

12 That when the vanity of the gods of the nations has been exposed, it cannot be doubted that they are unable to bestow eternal life on anyone, for they cannot help us even in this temporal life

There are, then, three kinds of theology, which the Greeks call mythical, physical and political, but which in Latin are called fabulous, natural and civil. And eternal life is to be hoped for neither from the fabulous, which even those who worship the many false gods have most freely condemned; nor from the civil, which is convicted of being a part of the fabulous because it is found to be very similar to it, or even worse. But perhaps there is someone for whom what has been said in this book is not enough. Let him, then, also add to it the many arguments found in the earlier books, and especially the fourth, on God as the giver of felicity.²⁵ For to what but felicity should men consecrate themselves for the sake of eternal life, if felicity were a goddess?²⁶ But it is not a goddess; it is a gift of God. To what God, then, should we consecrate ourselves, if, with godly love, we cherish the prospect of that eternal life in which there is true and full felicity, if not to the giver of felicity? In view of what has been said, no one, I think, will suppose that any of the gods of Rome is the giver of felicity. For when they are worshipped so vilely, and when they are still more vilely angered if they are not so worshipped, those gods confess themselves to be unclean spirits.

How, then, could a god who cannot give felicity give eternal life? For by eternal life we mean that state in which there is felicity without end. For if a soul is living in eternal pain, with which those unclean spirits will themselves also be tortured, that is eternal death rather than eternal life; for there is no greater or worse death than when death never dies. For since the soul was created immortal and

²⁴ *Adversus Faustum Manichaeum*, 6,7.

²⁵ Cf. Bk IV, 26.

²⁶ Cf. Bk IV, 18.

cannot by its nature be without life of some kind, its utmost death is alienation from the life of God in an eternity of punishment. Eternal life, therefore – that is, a life of endless felicity – is given by Him alone Who gives true felicity. And since this is something which those gods whom the civil theology worships are shown to be unable to give, they ought not to be worshipped even for the sake of temporal and earthly things, as we have shown in the preceding five books, still less for the sake of the eternal life which is to come after death, as we have shown in the present book also, with the others reinforcing what we say. But, since the force of inveterate custom has very deep roots, if it should seem to anyone that I have not argued the case sufficiently to show that this civil theology deserves to be rejected and shunned, let him turn his attention to another book which, with God's help, is to be added to this one.

Book VII

Preface

I am here endeavouring most diligently to uproot and extirpate depraved and ancient opinions which the long-continued error of the human race has implanted deeply and tenaciously in the dark places of the soul; for these opinions are hostile to the truth of godliness. In performing this task, my own small ability is aided by the co-operation of the grace of the true God. Those whose intellects are nimbler and superior, for whom the previous books are sufficient – indeed, more than sufficient – must bear with me patiently and equably for the sake of others, and not deem superfluous what they now feel is not necessary for themselves. For we are here proclaiming a matter of the very first importance: namely, that the true and truly holy Divinity, even though He furnishes us with the help necessary for the frail life that we live now, should nonetheless be sought and worshipped not for the transitory vapour of this mortal life, but for the sake of the blessed life to come, which is nothing less than eternal.

I Whether, since it is clear that deity is not to be found in the civil theology, we are to believe that it is to be found among the select gods

This Divinity, or, as we may call it, Deity (for this is a word which our Christian authors do not hesitate to use in order to render more accurately the Greek word *theotes*)¹ – this Divinity or Deity does not exist in the civil theology as described by Marcus Varro in sixteen books. In other words, it is not possible to arrive at the felicity of eternal life by worshipping gods of the kind established by the cities, nor by the kind of worship that was offered to them. Anyone not yet persuaded of this by the sixth book which we have just completed will, perhaps, when he has read this one, have nothing further to desire in order to dispose of this question.

For it is possible that someone will suppose that the select and principal gods dealt with by Varro in his last book, of which we

¹ Cf. Bk X, I.

have so far said little, are at any rate worthy to be worshipped for the sake of the blessed life which is nothing less than eternal. As to this, I do not say what Tertullian said, perhaps more wittily than truly: that 'if some gods are 'selected', like onions, then surely the others are rejected as bad'.² I do not say this, for I see that some can be chosen even from among the select for a greater and more excellent office: as in the army, where, when recruits have been chosen, some are chosen again for a more exacting kind of armed military service. In the Church also, when some persons are chosen [*eliguntur*] to be at the head, this certainly does not mean that the rest are rejected, for all good and faithful men are rightly called 'elect'. Again, in building a house, corner-stones are selected; but this does not mean that the rest are rejected, for they are assigned to some other parts of the structure.³ Some grapes are chosen to be eaten; but we do not reject the rest, which we leave for drinking. There is no need to pursue the matter further, since the point is clear. The selection of certain gods from among many, then, does not mean that either he who wrote on the subject, or the worshippers of the gods, or the gods themselves, should be reproached. Rather, we should turn attention to the question of who these select gods are, and for what purpose they appear to have been selected.

2 Who the select gods are, and whether they are held to be exempt from the duties of the lower gods

These, then, are the gods whom Varro commends as select in the course of his one book on the subject: Janus, Jupiter, Saturn, Genius, Mercury, Apollo, Mars, Vulcan, Neptune, Sol, Orcus, Liber Pater,⁴ Tellus, Ceres, Juno, Luna, Diana, Minerva, Venus, Vesta. There are twenty all told: twelve male and eight female.

Are these divine beings called select because the functions which they perform in the world are greater, or because they have become better known to the people and so receive a greater degree of worship? If it is because of the greater tasks which are performed by them in the world, we ought not to find them among that plebeian

² *Ad nat.*, 2,9.

³ Cf. Psalm 118,22.

⁴ Cf. Bk vi,9; Horace, *Epist.* 2,1,5; Cicero, *De nat. deor.*, 2,24,62.

multitude of deities, as it were, to whom minute and trifling tasks are deputed. Yet, first of all, at the conception of a foetus, at which moment all the tasks begin which are minutely distributed among the divine beings, Janus opens the way for the receiving of the seed. Saturn is there also, by reason of the seed itself. Liber is there, who brings relief to the male by the ejaculation of semen; and Libera, whom our adversaries wish to say is also Venus, confers the same blessing on the woman, when she also is relieved by the emission of seed. All these are among those called select. But the goddess Mena is there too: she presides over the menstrual flow; and, though she is the daughter of Jupiter, she is obscure nonetheless. But this province of regulating the menstrual flow is also assigned to Juno herself by the same author in his book on the select gods. She, indeed, is the queen of the select gods; yet here, as Juno Lucina, she presides over the same blood in company with the same Mena, her step-daughter. Also present are two exceedingly obscure gods, Vitumnus and Sentinus, one of whom bestows life and the other sensation upon the foetus; and although these two are entirely obscure, they surely bestow much more than do all those noble and select gods. For, surely, without life and sensation, what is the whole of that object carried in the mother's womb but a most worthless thing, comparable to slime and dust?

3 That no reason can be discovered why some gods are called select, since the performance of more exalted functions is deputed to many inferior gods

For what reason, then, were so many select gods compelled to perform such very minor tasks, in which they are surpassed, in the munificence of what they distribute, by Vitumnus and Sentinus, whom 'an obscure fame has concealed'?⁵ For the select god Janus confers access: a door, as it were, for the seed; the select Saturn confers the seed itself; the select Liber confers the emission of seed on men, and Libera, who is also Ceres or Venus, confers the same gift upon women. The select Juno – not alone, but in company with Mena – confers the menstrual flow, in order that what has been conceived may grow; yet it is the obscure and unknown Vitumnus

⁵ Virgil, *Aen.*, 5,302.

who confers life, and the obscure and unknown Sentinus who confers sensation, which two things are as much superior to the others as they are themselves inferior to intellect and reason. For just as those creatures who employ reason and intellect are undoubtedly better than those who live and feel like cattle, without intellect and reason, so also are those creatures which are gifted with life and sensation rightly placed above those which neither live nor feel. And so Vitumnus the life-giver and Sentinus the sense-giver ought rather to have been regarded as select gods than Janus, who opens the way for the seed, and Saturn, the giver or sower of the seed, and Liber and Libera, who cause the seed to move and be emitted. For the seed is unworthy even to be thought of until it attains to life and sensation. Yet these select gifts of life and sensation are not given by select gods, but by certain unknown, and, having regard to their dignity, neglected gods.

But it may be replied that Janus has power over all beginnings, and therefore that the opening made for conception is not unworthily attributed to him; that Saturn has power over all seeds, and therefore that the sowing of human seed cannot be considered apart from his activity; that Liber and Libera preside over the releasing of all seeds, and so also over those which pertain to the procreation of mankind; and that Juno has charge of all purgations and births, and therefore does not neglect the purgation of women and the births of human beings. In this case, let our adversaries ask themselves what answer they should give in the case of Vitumnus and Sentinus: whether they wish them also to have power over all things which live and have sensation. If they do, then let them consider in how sublime a position they are about to place these two gods. For to be born from seeds is to be born on the earth and from the earth, whereas, in their opinion, life and sensation are also attributes of the heavenly gods. But if, on the other hand, they say that Vitumnus and Sentinus are placed in charge only of those things which come alive in the flesh and are served by its senses, then why does not that god who makes everything live and feel also give life and sensation to the flesh, bestowing this gift upon everything born as part of his universal activity? And, in this case, what need is there of Vitumnus and Sentinus? But if these extreme and lowest things, so to speak, have been entrusted by a god who presides universally over life and sensation to the other gods as to servants, are these

select gods themselves so destitute of servants that they could not find any to whom they in turn might entrust such things? Are they, in spite of all the nobility for which they were, it seems, worthy to be selected, compelled to do their work alongside the ignoble ones? Juno is a select goddess and a queen, and the sister and wife of Jupiter; yet she is also Iterduca for children, and performs this task alongside the most obscure goddesses Abeona and Adeona. In the same sphere as Abeona and Adeona, our adversaries have placed the goddess Mens. She gives to boys a good mind; yet she is not ranked among the select gods – as if anything greater could be given to a man than a good mind! Juno, however, is placed among the select gods because she is Iterduca and Domiduca – as if it were of any advantage to make a journey and return home again if the mind is not good! But the goddess who bestows the gift of a good mind was never placed among the select gods by those who made the selection, even though she ought indeed to have been preferred to Minerva, to whom, in this minute distribution of tasks, they assigned the memory of boys. For who will doubt that it is far better to have a good mind than a good memory, no matter how great its capacity? For no one is bad who has a good mind; but some of the worst of men have a marvellous memory, and they are so much the worse because they cannot forget the wicked things of which they think. Yet Minerva is among the select gods, while Mens is hidden in the common ruck. What shall I say of Virtue? What of Felicity? Of these I have already said much in the fourth book.⁶ Although our adversaries held these to be divine, they did not wish to assign them a place among the select gods; yet they did assign such a place to Mars and Orcus: the one a god who causes death, and the other one who receives the dead.

We see, then, that in these little tasks, which are distributed, each to each, to so many gods, even the select gods work like the Senate, in co-operation with the lower class. Also, we find that some gods who were not thought in the least worthy to be selected have charge of far greater and better things than do those who are called select. And so we are left to conclude that the latter have been called select and principal not because they are outstanding in the tasks which they perform in the world, but because they have chanced to

⁶ Bk IV, 21; 23.

become better known to the people. Hence Varro himself says that it has fallen to some father-gods and mother-gods, as it does to some men, to be obscure. If, therefore, Felicity perhaps ought not to have been placed among the select gods, since these attained their nobility not by merit, but by fortune, Fortune certainly should have been given a place among them: or, rather, before them; because they say that this goddess bestows her gifts on each man not according to any rational principle, but as chance may decide. She should have held the highest place among the select gods; for it is especially among them that she shows what she can do: we see that they have been selected not for any outstanding virtue or rational happiness, but by that random power of fortune which her worshippers believe that she wields.

For that most distinguished author Sallust is perhaps thinking of the gods as well as of men when he says: 'But undoubtedly Fortune rules in all things: she renders all things famous or obscure more according to caprice than according to truth.'⁷ For our adversaries can find no reason why, though both are consecrated as divine beings, Venus should be famous and Virtue obscure; for their merits are not to be compared. Or, if a divine being has deserved a place of honour because more people seek after it – for more people seek Venus than Virtue – then why is the goddess Minerva famous and the goddess Pecunia obscure?⁸ For more members of the human race are tempted by greed than by knowledge of the arts. Indeed, even among those who are craftsmen you seldom find a man who does not practise his art for the sake of pecuniary reward; and a higher value is always placed upon the end for which a thing is done than upon the means by which it is done. If, then, this selection of gods was made according to the judgment of the ignorant multitude, why was the goddess Pecunia not preferred to Minerva, since it is for the sake of money [*pecunia*] that there are many craftsmen? If, on the other hand, the selection is due to a few wise men, why was Virtue not preferred to Venus, when reason by far prefers the former to the latter?

At any rate, as I have already said, if Fortune herself, as those who attribute most influence to her believe, rules in all things and

⁷ *Catil.*, 8,1.

⁸ Cf. Juvenal, 1,112ff.

renders all things famous or obscure more by caprice than by truth; and if she has contrived to exercise so great a power even over the gods as to render those of them famous whom she would, and those obscure whom she would, according to her own capricious judgment: then she certainly ought to occupy a pre-eminent place among the select gods, since she has such a pre-eminent power over them. Or are we to suppose that she cannot occupy such a place, and that this is simply because Fortune herself has had an adverse fortune? She has, then, acted against herself; for, while making others noble, she has not ennobled herself.

4 That the inferior gods who have not been rendered infamous by scandals have been better dealt with than the select gods whose many shameful deeds are celebrated

But anyone who values distinction and renown might congratulate those select gods and call them fortunate, if he did not see that they have been selected more to suffer injury than to receive honour. For that swarm of lower gods was protected by its very lack of nobility from being overwhelmed with scandal. Certainly, we laugh when we see assigned to them the duties which are distributed among them according to the fancies of human opinion. They are like those who collect small portions of the public revenue, or like workmen in the street of silversmiths, where one vessel passes through the hands of many craftsmen before it emerges perfect, although it could have been perfected by one perfect craftsman. But many craftsmen are employed in this way only because it is thought better for each part of an art to be learned by a single workman quickly and easily, so that all are not be compelled to acquire the whole art slowly and with difficulty.

There is, however, hardly one of these non-select gods to be found who has brought infamy upon himself by any crime. By contrast, there is hardly one of the select gods who has not received upon himself the mark of some notable scandal. The latter have descended to the humble tasks of the obscure gods; but the obscure gods have not risen to the sublime crimes of the select ones. As it happens, there does not readily occur to me anything that might tend to the condemnation of Janus; and perhaps he was, indeed,

such a one as lived more innocently than the rest, and more removed from crime and disgrace. He received the fleeing Saturn with kindness, and he divided his kingdom with his guest in such a way that each of them founded a city: the one Janiculum, and the other Saturnia.⁹ But the Romans, eager for every kind of unseemliness in the worship of the gods, and finding his life to be without disgrace, disgraced him by giving him an image of monstrous deformity, making him sometimes two-faced and sometimes, as it were, double, with four faces.¹⁰ Or was it, perhaps, their wish that, since most of the select gods had lost face through the perpetration of shameful deeds, Janus himself should appear with more faces, to match his greater innocence?

5 Of the more secret doctrine of the pagans, and their naturalistic explanations

But let us hear, rather, our adversaries' own naturalistic interpretations, by means of which they endeavour to disguise their disgraceful and miserable error with the appearance of profounder doctrine. First of all, Varro commends these naturalistic explanations so highly as to say that the men of old invented the images, attributes and adornments of the gods precisely so that, when those who had approached the mysteries of the doctrine had seen these visible things with their eyes, they might also see with their mind the soul of the world and its parts: that is, the true gods. He also says that those who made the images of the gods in human form seem to have believed that the mortal mind which exists in the human body is very similar to the immortal mind. It is as if vessels were placed to represent the gods: as, for example, a wine-jar might be placed in the temple of Liber, to signify wine, that which is contained being signified by that which contains. Thus, the rational soul was signified by an image which had a human form, because the human form is, so to speak, the vessel in which that nature is wont to be contained which they wish to attribute to God, or to the gods.

These are the mysteries of doctrine to which that most learned man Varro penetrated, so that he might bring them forth into the

⁹ Cf. Virgil, *Aen.*, 8,355ff; Ovid, *Fast.*, 1,235ff.

¹⁰ Cf. Martial, *Epig.*, 10,286.

light. But, O most acute of men, have you lost among those mysteries that prudence by which you once soberly judged that those who first set up images for the people diminished the reverence of their citizens and added error, and that the ancient Romans honoured the gods more purely when they were without images? When you ventured to speak thus against the Romans of later times, those men of old were your authorities. For if the most ancient Romans had also worshipped by means of images, perhaps you would have suppressed by the silence of fear your belief, however correct, that images should not have been established. And perhaps you would then have proclaimed all the more eloquently and loftily the mysteries of doctrine which are concealed in such pernicious and vain images. But your soul, so learned and so clever – and for this reason I grieve deeply for you – could never through those mysteries of doctrine have attained its God. It could never, that is, have attained the God by Whom, not with Whom, it was made; of Whom it is not a part, but a work: the God Who is not the soul of everything, but Who made every soul, and in Whose light alone, if it be not ungrateful for His grace, the soul is made blessed.

But the remarks which we shall make presently will show what manner of things these mysteries of doctrine are, and how we are to value them. Meanwhile, this most learned man declares that the soul of the world and its parts are true gods; and from this fact we perceive that his theology as a whole – that is, the natural theology to which he attributes so much – has been able to extend itself only to the nature of the rational soul. He treats very briefly of natural theology in the introductory part of his last book, which he wrote concerning the select gods; and we shall now see whether he has been able in that book to bring this natural theology into agreement with the civil theology. If so, then the whole of theology is natural; and so what need was there to distinguish the civil from the natural with such great care? If the distinction was rightly made, however, then, since not even the natural theology which gives him so much pleasure is true – for although it has reached as far as the soul, it has not reached the true God Who made the soul – how much more abject and false is the civil theology, which is chiefly occupied with the nature of bodies! This much will be demonstrated by means of the interpretations of the civil theology itself, which Varro has

sought out and explained with such care. It is now necessary to mention some of these.

6 Of the opinion of Varro that God is the soul of the world, which nevertheless has in its various parts many souls whose nature is divine

The same Varro, then, still in his preliminary remarks concerning natural theology, says that, in his judgment, God is the soul of the world, which the Greeks call the *cosmos*, and that this world itself is God. But, he says, just as a wise man, though formed of body and soul, is nonetheless called wise by virtue of his soul, so the world is called God by virtue of its soul, even though it too consists of soul and body. Here, Varro seems after a fashion to confess that there is one God. In order to introduce more, however, he adds that the world is divided into two parts, heaven and earth; that the heaven is twofold, because divided into aether and air; that the earth is divided into water and land; and that, of these, aether is the highest, air second, water third and earth fourth. All these four parts are full of souls: immortal souls in the aether and air, and mortal souls in water and on land. From the highest circle of the heavens to the circle of the moon there are aetherial souls, the stars and planets; and these are not only understood to be heavenly gods, but are also seen as such. Then, between the orbit of the moon and the highest region of cloud and wind, there are aerial souls; these, however, are seen not with the eyes, but with the mind, and they are called Heroes and Lares and Genii. This, briefly stated, is the natural theology which Varro sets forth in his introductory remarks, and which pleased not only Varro, but many other philosophers besides; and we must discuss it more carefully when, with God's help, we have completed what remains to be said of the civil theology, as far as it concerns the select gods.

7 Whether it was reasonable for Janus and Terminus to be separated into two divine beings

Who, then, I ask, is the Janus from whom Varro takes his starting-point? Our adversaries reply, He is the world. This, at any rate, is

a short and clear answer. Why, then, is it said that the beginnings of things belong to him, while their ends belong to another deity whom they call Terminus? For they say that it is by reason of beginnings and ends that these two gods have two months dedicated to them in addition to the ten which begin with March and go on to December: January to Janus, and February to Terminus. This, they say, is the reason why the *Terminalia* are celebrated in the same month, February, as the sacred purification is made which they call *Februum*, from which the month receives its name.¹¹ Do the beginnings of things belong to the world, then, which is Janus, but not the ends, so that a second god is appointed over the latter? Will they not admit that all the things which, they say, begin in this world also come to an end in this world? What a vain thing it is, to give Janus only the power to do half a task, yet to give his image a double face!

Would not this double face be much more elegantly interpreted if they were to say that Janus and Terminus are the same, and to devote one face to beginnings and the other to ends? For anyone who acts must look to both, and he who does not look back to the beginning at every stage of his activity does not look forward to the end. Hence, it is necessary for the intention that looks forward to be connected with the memory that looks backwards; for he who forgets what he has begun will not find a way to finish it. If the Romans had believed that the blessed life is begun in this world but perfected outside the world, and so assigned to Janus – that is, to the world – only the power over beginnings, then surely they would have placed Terminus above him, and would not have shut that same Terminus out from the number of the select gods. Yet, even as it is, when the beginnings and ends of merely temporal things are assigned to these two gods, they still ought to give more honour to Terminus; for the joy is greater when anything is brought to perfection, whereas things begun are always full of anxiety until they are brought to their end. He who begins anything chiefly seeks, strives after, expects and desires this end; nor does he exult in something begun until it is brought to completion.

¹¹ Cf. Ovid, *Fast.*, 2,639ff; Plutarch, *Numa*, 19; Varro, *De ling. Lat.*, 6,33f.

8 For what reason the worshippers of Janus have made his image with two faces yet sometimes wish it to be seen with four

But now let an interpretation of the two-faced image be propounded. Our adversaries say that Janus has two faces, one in front and one behind, because our open mouth seems to resemble the world. Hence the Greeks call the palate *ouranos*,¹² and, Varro says, some Latin poets have called the sky *palatum*.¹³ From this hollow space in the mouth there is, they say, a way out, towards the teeth, and a way in, towards the throat. Behold what has befallen the world for the sake of a Greek or poetical word for our palate! What does this have to do with the soul, or with eternal life? Let us worship this god solely for the sake of our saliva, for which a door opens in both directions under the heaven of the palate: one to swallow it down and the other to spit it out. What, indeed, is more absurd? For we do not find in the world itself two doors opposite to one another, through which it may either admit anything into itself or cast it out from itself; yet from our mouth and throat, which do not resemble anything in the world, they compose an image of the world in Janus merely because of the palate, to which Janus bears no resemblance.

And when they make an image with four faces and call it a 'double Janus', they interpret this as meaning the four quarters of the world, as though the world looked out upon anything external to itself, as the four faces of Janus do. Moreover, if Janus is the world, and the world consists of four quarters, then the image of Janus with two faces is false; or, if it is true because the expression 'East and West' is also understood to mean the whole world, then, when we call the other two quarters 'North and South', will someone say that the world is double, just as they call Janus with four faces a double Janus? In the case of the two-faced Janus, they did at least find a similitude of the world expressed in terms of a man's mouth. But they have no way at all of explaining how four doors, open for entry and exit, express any such similitude: unless, that is, Neptune should come to their aid and throw them a fish which, in addition to the opening of its mouth and throat, also has gills to the

¹² Cf. Aristotle, *De part. animal.*, 1,17.

¹³ Cf. Cicero, *De nat. deor.*, 2,18,49.

right and left! But still no soul escapes this vanity through all these doors, except the soul which hears the Truth say: 'I am the door.'¹⁴

9 Of the power of Jupiter, and his likeness to Janus

But let our adversaries now explain how they would have us understand Jove, who is also called Jupiter. He is the god, they say, who has power over the causes by which anything comes about in the world; and how great a thing this is is attested by that most noble line of Virgil: 'Happy is he who has come to understand the causes of things.'¹⁵ Why, then, is Janus placed before him? Let that most acute and learned man Varro answer us. 'Because', he says, 'beginnings are in the power of Janus, and last things are in the power of Jupiter. Jupiter is therefore rightly held to be the king of all; for last things are greater than first things, since, though the first take precedence in time, the last things surpass them in dignity.' This would have been rightly said if the distinction in question were one between the beginning of an act and its fulfilment. To set out is the beginning of an act and to arrive is its fulfilment; to commence to learn is the beginning of an act, and the acquisition of knowledge is its fulfilment; and so, in all cases, beginnings come first and fulfilment comes at the end. But this is a matter which has already been discussed in connexion with Janus and Terminus. The causes, however, which are assigned to Jupiter, are efficient causes, not effects; nor can it be at all the case that such causes are preceded in time by things done, or by the beginnings of such things. For that which causes is always prior to that which is caused; and so, though the beginnings of things done may pertain to Janus, they are nonetheless not prior to the efficient causes which our adversaries attribute to Jupiter. For just as nothing occurs, so does nothing begin to occur, unless it is preceded by an efficient cause.

If this is the god who has in his power all the causes of all the natures which have been made, and of all natural things, and if the people call him Jupiter and worship him with such insults and vile calumnies as they do, then they are implicated in a sacrilege more dreadful than if they believed that there is no god at all. Hence, it

¹⁴ John 10,9.

¹⁵ *Georg.*, 2,490.

would be better for them to bestow the name of Jupiter upon some other god: upon one worthy of wicked and shameful honours. Let them substitute some vain fiction as the object of their blasphemy, just as Saturn is said to have been given a stone to devour instead of his son. Let them do this rather than saying that this Jupiter is both Thunderer and adulterer: one who rules the whole world yet gives himself up to such great dishonour; one who has nature and the highest causes of all natural things within his power, yet who does not have good intentions of his own.

Next, I ask, what place among the gods do our adversaries now assign to this Jupiter, if Janus is the world? For the true gods, as Varro defined them, are the soul of the world and its parts; and, according to this, whatever does not fall within this definition is therefore not a true god. Will they say, then, that Jupiter is the soul of the world and that Janus is his body: that is, the visible world? If they say this, they will have no reason for calling Janus a god, since, on their own account, the body of the world is not a god: it is the soul of the world and its parts that are gods. Thus, the same Varro clearly states his belief that the soul of the world is God and that the world itself is God; but, he adds, just as a wise man, though composed of both soul and body, is called wise by virtue of his soul, so the world, though it consists of both soul and body, is called God by virtue of its soul. The body of the world, therefore, is not God. Rather, its soul alone is God; or, if its body and soul taken together are God, it is God not by virtue of its body, but by virtue of its soul. If Janus is the world, therefore, and if Janus is God, will our adversaries say of Jupiter, in order that he too may be God, that he is some part of Janus? It is more usual to attribute the whole universe to Jupiter: hence the saying, 'All things are full of Jupiter.'¹⁶

If, therefore, Jupiter is to be a god, and, above all, if he is to be the king of the gods, they must deem him to be nothing other than the world, so that he may rule over the other gods who are, according to them, his parts. Again, in that book *De cultu deorum* which he wrote in addition to his other works, the same Varro interprets certain lines of Valerius Soranus in a way which is consistent with the view that Jupiter is the world. The lines in question are these:

¹⁶ Virgil, *Ecl.*, 3, 60.

'Almighty Jupiter, begetter of kings and things and gods; mother of the gods also: one God comprising all.' In that same book, Varro expounds these words as follows. The one who emits seed, he says, is called male; the one who receives it, female; and Jupiter is the world, who both emits all seeds and receives them into himself. 'It is with good reason', says Varro, 'that Soranus wrote of Jupiter as both begetter and mother, and with no less good reason as one God comprising all. For the world is one, and that one world contains all things within itself.'

10 Whether Janus and Jupiter are rightly distinguished from one another

Since Janus is the world, therefore, and Jupiter is the world, yet the world is one, why are there two gods, Janus and Jupiter? Why do they have separate temples, separate altars, different rites and dissimilar statues? Is it because power over beginnings and power over causes are two different things, and that the former power receives the name of Janus and the latter that of Jupiter? But if one man has power over two different things or with respect to two different arts, should we speak of two different judges or craftsmen because the powers are different in each case? So, therefore, when one god has power over beginnings and over causes also, is it necessary to suppose that he is two gods because beginnings and causes are two things? If, however, our adversaries consider that this is a proper distinction, then let them also say that Jupiter himself is as many gods as there are additional titles which they have given him by reason of his many powers; for all the things from which those additional titles are derived are very numerous and diverse. I shall mention a few of them.

11 Of the additional titles of Jupiter, which are held to refer not to many gods, but to one and the same god

The Romans have called him Victor, Invictus, Opitulus, Impulsor, Stator, Centumpeđa, Supinalis, Tigillus, Almus, Ruminus, and by other names too numerous to list. They have applied these

additional titles to the one god by reason of diverse causes and powers; yet, although he has so many functions, they have not required him to be as many gods. He conquers all; he is unconquered; he brings help to the needy; he has the power to impel, to halt, to establish, to overthrow; like a beam, he maintains and sustains the world; he nourishes all things, and he feeds all animals by the *ruma*, that is, by the breast. As we see, there are among these things some that are great and others that are small; yet one god is supposed to perform them all. The causes of things and their beginnings, by reason of which our adversaries have wished to say that the one world is two gods, Jupiter and Janus, are, I think, more closely related to one another than are the maintaining of the world and the giving of the breast to animals. Even for two tasks so different in power and dignity as these, however, no need was felt for two gods; for the one Jupiter was called Tigillus with respect to the first and Ruminus with respect to the second. I do not say that it would have been more suitable for Juno rather than Jupiter to proffer the breast to sucking animals, especially when there was also a goddess Rumina to help and serve her in this task. For I think it may be replied that Juno herself is none other than Jupiter, according to those verses of Valerius Soranus, where it is said: 'Almighty Jupiter, begetter of kings and things and gods; mother of the gods also, one god comprising all.' Why, then, was he called Ruminus, when, if we were perhaps to seek more diligently, we should find that he is also that goddess Rumina? When we considered the case of one stalk of wheat, we rightly thought it unworthy of the majesty of the gods that the care of the knots should pertain to one god and that of the sheath to another. How much more unworthy is it, then, that the care of one trivial task – namely, the nourishing of animals from the breast – should require the power of two gods: one of whom is Jupiter himself, the king of all things! What is more, he performs this task not with his own wife, but with some obscure Rumina. It may be, however, that he himself is indeed Rumina: Ruminus for sucking males, perhaps, and Rumina for females. I would have said that the Romans would not have wished to attach a female name to Jupiter, were it not for the fact that he is called both begetter and mother in those verses of Valerius Soranus. Also, I have read that, among his other titles, he is called Pecunia, one of the goddesses whom we found among those

minor deities of whom we have already spoken in the fourth book.¹⁷ But let them answer this: since both males and females have money, why is he not called both Pecunia and Pecunius, as he is called Rumina and Ruminus?

12 That Jupiter is also called Pecunia

How elegant, indeed, is the account which the Romans have given of this name! 'And he is called Pecunia', Varro says, 'because all things are his'. What a marvellous reason for naming a divine being! Indeed, for a god to whom all things belong to be called Money is most vile and insulting. For what are all those things worth which, taken together, men possess under the name of money, in comparison with everything that is contained in heaven and on earth? But no doubt it was avarice which assigned this name to Jupiter, so that whoever loved money might seem to love no ordinary god, but the king of all things himself. It would be a very different matter if Jupiter were called Riches; for riches are one thing and money another: we call men rich who are wise, just and good, even if they have little or no money. It is by reason of their virtues that they are rich, because, through them, they are content with what they have even if the things necessary for bodily life are lacking. The greedy, however, are poor, for they are always grasping and always wanting. No matter how enormous the amount of money they can command may be, no matter how great its abundance, they cannot do anything but want. And we rightly call the true God Himself rich: not, of course, in money, but in all power. Therefore, though people with plenty of money are called rich, they are inwardly poor if they are greedy. By the same token, those who lack money are called paupers; but they are inwardly rich if they are wise.

What, then, is the wise man to make of a theology which bestows upon the king of the gods the name of something 'which no wise man has ever desired'?¹⁸ For if there were anything wholesome and pertinent to eternal life to be learnt from this doctrine, how much more readily would the god who rules the world have been called by it not Money, but Wisdom, the love of which purges the soul from the defilement of greed: that is, from the love of money!

¹⁷ Bk IV, 21; 24.

¹⁸ Sallust. *Catal.*, II, 3.

13 That when it is explained what Saturn is and what Genius is, we learn that they and Jupiter are one and the same

But why say more of this Jupiter, if it is true that all the other gods are to be equated with him? – in which case the opinion that there are many gods is vacuous, since, if they are deemed to be his parts or powers, he himself is all of them. And this opinion is equally vacuous if it is thought that the animating force supposedly diffused throughout all things receives the names of the various gods from the parts which the mass of this visible world combines within itself, and from the manifold operations of nature.

What, for instance, is Saturn? ‘He is one of the principal gods’, says Varro, ‘who has lordship over the sowing of all seeds’. But did not Varro’s exposition of those verses of Valerius Soranus establish that Jupiter is the world, and that he emits all seeds from himself and receives them into himself? It is Jupiter, then, who has lordship over the sowing of all seeds. And what is Genius? ‘The god’, says Varro, ‘who is set over, and who has power over, everything that is begotten’. But do not our adversaries believe that nothing else has this power except the world, which was called Jupiter, the begetter and mother? And when, in another place, Varro says that a ‘genius’ is the rational soul of each man, that each individual therefore has one, and that the soul of the world is God, he brings us back to the same conclusion: that we are to believe that the soul of the world itself is a universal ‘genius’, and that this is what they call Jupiter. For if every genius is a god, and if the soul of every man is a genius,¹⁹ it follows that the soul of every man is a god. And if the very absurdity of this conclusion compels even our adversaries to reject it, then it remains for them to give the name Genius, in this singular and pre-eminent sense, to the god whom they call the soul of the world: that is, to Jupiter.

14 Of the offices of Mercury and Mars

They have not, however, found a way of equating Mercury and Mars with any parts of the world and with the working of God in

¹⁹ Cf. Apuleius, *De deo Sacr.*, 14.

the world's elements; and so they have set them over the works of men at least as the ministers of speech and warfare respectively. But if Mercury wields power over the speech of the gods also – that is, if Jupiter speaks according to the will of Mercury, or has received from him the faculty of speech – then Mercury is lord of the very king of the gods: which is clearly absurd. If, however, it is power over human speech only which is thought to be assigned to Mercury, then it is impossible to believe that Jupiter is willing to descend to giving the breast not only to children, but to animals also – for which reason he is called Ruminus – yet is unwilling to have the care of our speech, by reason of which we excel the beasts, assigned to him. For this reason, then, it would seem that Jupiter and Mercury are the same.

But perhaps it is the faculty of speech itself which is called 'Mercury', as certain things which are said in interpretation of the name suggest. For it is said that he is called Mercury, which means 'He who runs between', because speech runs between men. Also, he is called Hermes in Greek because speech, or interpretation, which certainly pertains to speech, is called *hermeneia* by the Greeks.²⁰ Hence also, he presides over business transactions, because speech passes between sellers and buyers. Again, the wings on his head and feet signify that speech flies through the air like a bird; and he is called a messenger because language is the messenger which proclaims all our thoughts. If, therefore, Mercury is the faculty of speech itself, then, by our adversaries' own admission, he is not a god. But, though they make gods for themselves who are not even demons, still, when they pray to unclean spirits, they are possessed by those who are not gods, but demons.

Again, because they could not find any element or part of the world for Mars either, where he might perform some natural work or other, they have called him the god of war, which is a work of men, and not a work of the most desirable kind. If, therefore, Felicity were to give everlasting peace, Mars would have nothing to do. But perhaps war itself is called Mars, just as speech is called Mercury; in which case, it is again clear that he is not a god. Would that it were equally true that there were no war to be falsely called a god!

²⁰ Cf. Plato, *Cratylus*, 408A; Arnobius, *Adv. gent.*, 3,32; Isidore, *Etym.*, 7,45,384.

15 Of certain stars, to which the pagans have given
the names of their gods

But perhaps these gods are the stars which have been called by their names. For the pagans call one star Mercury and, again, another Mars. But there is also a star called Jupiter; yet, for them, the world is Jupiter. There is also a star called Saturn; yet they give to him a task of no small importance: namely, responsibility for all seeds. There also is the brightest of all the stars: that which they call Venus; yet they wish to say that the goddess Venus is also the moon. Moreover, Venus and Juno are rivals for that most brilliant star, as though it were another golden apple; for some say that the morning star belongs to Venus, and some to Juno. As always, however, Venus conquers. For by far the greater number assign that star to Venus: so much so that there is hardly anyone to be found who holds the opposite view.

But who can keep himself from laughing when they say that Jupiter is the king of all, yet his star is so far surpassed in brightness by that of Venus? For his star should have been as much more brilliant than the rest as he himself is more powerful. Our adversaries reply that Jupiter looks as it does because the star which is thought to be more dim is in fact higher and much more remote from the earth. If, then, the greater dignity deserves the higher place, why is Saturn still higher in the heavens than Jupiter? Was the vain fable which made Jupiter the king not able to reach as far as the stars? And has Saturn at least been permitted to obtain in the heavens what he could not obtain either in his own kingdom or in the Capitol? Moreover, why did Janus not receive some star? If it is because he is the world and all the stars are in him, the world is also Jupiter's, yet he has one. Or did Janus come to the best arrangement he could, and accept the extra faces which he has on earth in place of the one star that he does not have in the heavens?

Again, if it is only as stars that Mercury and Mars are deemed to be parts of the world, and so can be reckoned as gods – for, of course, speech and war are not parts of the world, but activities of men – why have the Romans not established any sacred rites or temples for Aries and Taurus and Cancer and Scorpio and the rest which they number as celestial signs and which consist not of single stars, but each of them of many stars? These, they say, are located

in the highest part of the heavens, where a more constant motion imparts to the stars an invariable course. Why, then, have they not recognised these as gods, I do not say among the select gods, but not even among the, as it were, plebeian gods?

16 Of Apollo and Diana and the other select gods whom they wish to call parts of the world

Although our adversaries wish to say that Apollo is a diviner and physician, still, to give him a place as some part of the world, they say that he is also the sun and, similarly, that his sister Diana is the moon and the guardian of roads (which is why they choose to call her a virgin, for a road produces nothing). And both of them have arrows, because those two heavenly bodies shoot their rays from the heavens to the earth. They choose to call Vulcan the fire of the world, Neptune the water of the world, and Dis Pater (that is, Orcus) the earthy and lowest part of the world. Liber and Ceres they place over seeds – the former over male seeds and the latter over female; or the one over moist seeds and the other over dry. And all this together is referred back to the world: that is, to Jupiter, who was called the begetter and mother because he emitted all seeds from himself and received them into himself. Sometimes, however, they wish to say that this same Ceres is the Great Mother, and then they say that she is nothing else but the earth, and that she is also Juno; and therefore they attribute to her the secondary causes of things. It is Jupiter, however, who is called the begetter and mother of the gods, because, according to them, the whole world itself is Jupiter's. Minerva also, because they placed her over human arts yet did not find even a star in which to set her, they have said to be either the highest part of the aether, or even the moon. Again, Vesta herself they have supposed to be the greatest goddess of all, because she is the earth; yet they have also believed that the milder fire of the world – that which readily belongs to the use of mankind, not the more violent kind of Vulcan – is to be assigned to her. And in this way they wish to say that all those select gods are this world: some of them being the whole of it, and some of them its parts. For instance, Jupiter is the whole of it, whereas Genius, the Great Mother, Sol and Luna (or, rather, Apollo and Diana), are parts of it. And sometimes they make one god many things, and sometimes

one thing many gods. Many things are one god in the case of Jupiter himself; for the whole world is held and said to be Jupiter, and the sky is Jupiter, and a planet is Jupiter. Again, Juno is the mistress of secondary causes, and Juno is the air, and Juno is the earth, and, if she could overcome Venus, Juno would also be a star. Similarly, Minerva is the highest part of the aether, and Minerva is also the moon, which they deem to be at the lowest limit of the aether. But they also make one thing into several gods; for the world is both Janus and Jupiter, and so too the earth is Juno and the Great Mother and Ceres.

17 That even Varro himself declared his own opinions of the gods to be ambiguous

And as with those things which I have cited as examples, so with all the rest: they complicate rather than explain. They rush hither and thither, first to one side, then to another, as errant opinion impels them; so that even Varro preferred to doubt everything rather than to affirm anything. For, having completed the first of his last three books concerning the certain gods, and having, in the second of these, begun to speak of the uncertain gods, he says:

I ought not to be reproached when, in this book, I set down doubtful opinions concerning the gods. For if anyone supposes that a firm judgment can or should be given, let him give one for himself when he has heard what I have to say. For my own part, I can more easily be led to doubt what I have said in the first book than to bring what I shall write in this one to any final conclusion.

Thus, he renders uncertain not only what he says concerning the uncertain gods, but also what he has to say concerning the certain gods.

Then, in his third book concerning the select gods, after an initial discussion of as much of the natural theology as he thought necessary by way of introduction, he comes to the vanities and insane lies of the civil theology; and, here, he is not only lacking the guidance of the truth of things, but is also oppressed by the authority of tradition. He says: 'I shall in this book write of the public gods of the Roman people, to whom they have dedicated temples, and

whom they have signally honoured by many adornments. But, writing after the fashion of Xenophanes of Colophon, I shall give an account of my opinions, not of what I know; for, in these matters, man has opinions, but only God has knowledge.²¹

It is not, then, an account of things understood or firmly believed that Varro diffidently promises when about to describe the institutions of men, but of things which are only matters of opinion and doubt. There were things that he knew: that there is a world, that heaven and earth exist, that heaven is resplendent with stars, that the earth is fertile with seeds, and things of this kind; and he also believed with firm conviction that this whole mass of nature is ruled and governed by a certain invisible and prepotent force. But he could not with the same conviction affirm that Janus is the world; nor could he find out how Saturn was both the father of Jupiter and yet had been made the subject of Jupiter as king; and other such things.

18 A more believable account of how pagan error became established

A more believable account is rendered of these gods when it is said that they were men, and that sacred rites and solemn festivals were established for each one of them, according to his genius, character, actions and circumstances, by those who chose to worship them as gods. These rites, creeping little by little into the souls of men – souls which resemble the demons in their eagerness for theatrical displays – spread far and wide as the poets adorned them with lies and deceitful spirits seduced men to accept them. For it is more likely that some ungodly young man, longing to rule, or afraid of being slain by an ungodly father, dethroned his father, than that Varro's interpretation of the story of Saturn's overthrow is correct: that Saturn was overthrown by his son Jupiter because cause, which belongs to Jupiter, comes before seed, which belongs to Saturn. If Varro's version were the true one, Saturn could never have been first, nor could he have been the father of Jupiter; for the cause always precedes the seed and is never generated from the seed. But whenever even the ablest men attempt to dignify the most vain

²¹ Cf. Cicero, *Acad. prior.*, 2,23,74.

fables or human deeds by giving naturalistic interpretations of them, they suffer such difficulties that we are compelled to grieve over their vanity also.

19 Of the interpretations by means of which a reason for worshipping Saturn is contrived

'They say', Varro remarks, 'that Saturn was wont to devour his offspring. This, however, means that seeds return to the place whence they came. And when', he says, 'a lump of earth was placed before him to be devoured instead of Jupiter, this signifies that, before the usefulness of ploughing was discovered, seeds were buried in the earth by the hands of men.' The earth itself, therefore, and not the seeds, should have been called Saturn; for it is the earth which, in a manner of speaking, devours what she has produced, because the seeds which have sprung from her return again to be received into her. And as for the story that Saturn received a lump of earth in place of Jupiter: how is this supposed to show that seeds were covered with soil by the hands of men? How can it be true that, because it was covered with earth, the seed was not devoured like other things? Varro seems to assume that he who placed the soil took away the seed, as Jupiter is said to have been stolen from Saturn when the lump of earth was placed before him; for, surely, the seed would have been devoured all the more thoroughly had it been covered by the soil. On this view, however, Jupiter is the seed, and not, as we said a moment ago, the cause of the seed.

But what are we to do with men who, because they are interpreting foolish things, cannot find anything wise to say? 'Saturn', Varro says, 'has a sickle, because of agriculture'. When he was king, however, agriculture did not yet exist; and therefore (according to the interpretation of the fables given by that same Varro) his times were regarded as the earliest, because the first men lived on such seeds as the earth brought forth spontaneously. But perhaps he received the sickle when he lost the sceptre, so that he who in the earliest times was a leisured king became a toiling labourer under the rule of his son!

Next, Varro says that certain peoples, such as the Carthaginians, habitually sacrificed children to Saturn, and that others, such as the Gauls, also sacrificed adults, and that this was done because the

human race is the best seed of all.²² What need is there to say more of this most cruel vanity? Let us, rather, notice this and cling to it: that these interpretations have no reference to the true God, Who is a living, incorporeal and immutable being, from Whom is to be sought a life blessed for all eternity. Rather, they have their end in things corporeal, temporal, mutable and mortal.

Varro says: 'When, in the fable, Saturn castrated his father Uranus, this signifies that the divine seed belongs to Saturn and not to Uranus.' What this means, as far as we can understand it, is that nothing in heaven is produced from seed. But lo! If he is the son of Uranus, then Saturn is the son of Jupiter; for our adversaries are careful to affirm on countless occasions that Jupiter is the heaven. So it is that those things which do not come from the Truth often overthrow one another themselves, even when no one assails them. Varro also says that Saturn was called Kronos, which, in the Greek language, signifies a period of time, without which, he says, a seed cannot be fruitful. These and many other things are said concerning Saturn, and all refer to seed. But surely Saturn, with such great power, should have been equal to the task of caring for seed by himself. Why are other gods required for this task, especially Liber and Libera (that is, Ceres)? Yet of these gods and their relation to seed Varro says as many things as if he had said nothing of Saturn.

20 Of the rites of the Eleusinian Ceres

Now among the rites of Ceres, those of Eleusis are renowned, for they were regarded among the Athenians as being the most noble. Varro gives no interpretation of these except in relation to grain, which Ceres discovered, and to Proserpine, whom Ceres lost when Orcus carried her off, and who, he says, signifies the fertility of seed. When this fertility departed at a certain season and the earth was mournful by reason of its barrenness, the belief arose that the daughter of Ceres – that is, the fertility which had been named Proserpine from *proserpere*²³ – had been carried off by Orcus and

²² Cf. Pliny, 36,5,39; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 1,38; Diodorus Siculus, 20,14; Orosius, *Hist.*, 4,6.

²³ For this see Ch. 24, below; cf. Varro, *De ling. Lat.*, 5,68.

imprisoned in the underworld. This circumstance was celebrated with public mourning. Then, when the same fertility returned once more, there was joy at Proserpine's return, and for this reason the rites were instituted. Varro then says that many things are taught in her mysteries, all of which pertain to the discovery of grain.

21 Of the wickedness of the rites celebrated in honour of Liber

Now come the rites of Liber, whom the Romans placed over liquid seed and, for this reason, not only over the juice of fruits, of which, in a certain sense, wine holds the first place, but over the semen of animals also. As to these rites, it is wearisome to speak at great length of the depth of wickedness which they have plumbed: not too wearisome, however, given that our adversaries are so proud in their stupidity. Among other things which I am compelled to omit because of their number, Varro says that certain rites of Liber were celebrated in Italy which were of such unrestrained wickedness that the shameful parts of the male were worshipped at crossroads in his honour. This, indeed, was not even done in secret, to preserve at least some modesty, but with an unconcealed display of baseness. For, during the days of the festival of Liber, this obscene member, placed on a little trolley, was first exhibited with great honour at the crossroads in the countryside, and then conveyed into the city itself. In the town of Lavinium, the whole of one month was assigned to Liber, during the days of which all men made use of the most obscene language, until the member was carried through the forum and brought to rest in its own place; and upon this dishonourable member it was necessary that the most honourable matron should publicly place a crown. In this way, it seems, the god Liber was to be propitiated, in order to secure the growth of seeds and to repel enchantment from the fields: a matron was compelled to do in public what even a prostitute would not have been allowed to do in the theatres if there were respectable women in the audience!

This was the reason, then, why Saturn was not believed to be sufficient by himself for the care of seeds: namely, so that the impure soul might find occasions for multiplying the gods; and so that, being justly abandoned by the one true God for its impurity,

and being prostituted to the many false gods by reason of its avidity for greater impurity, it should call these sacrileges sacred, and give itself up to be violated and polluted by hordes of foul demons.

22 Of Neptune and Salacia and Venilia

Now Neptune already had as his wife Salacia, who, they say, is the lower waters of the sea. Why, then, was Venilia also joined to him? For no reason, surely – for this was not necessary for the performance of the sacred rites – other than the soul's desire to multiply the number of demons to whom it might prostitute itself. But let us now examine an interpretation which has been put forward by Varro, who seeks to silence our condemnation by rendering a satisfactory account of this splendid theology. 'Venilia', he says, 'is the wave which comes to the shore; Salacia, that which returns to the sea'. But why are there two goddesses, when it is the same wave that comes in and goes out? Undoubtedly, what boils up here is the same furious lust after many gods. For though the water that comes in is not different from that which goes out, the soul is now defiled by two demons whom it has taken occasion by its vanity to invite; and when the soul goes out, it does not return.

I ask thee, O Varro, or you others who have read so many of the writings of such wise men and boast that you have learned some great thing: interpret this in a manner consistent, I do not say with that eternal and immutable nature which alone is God, but at any rate with the soul of the world and its parts which you regard as true gods. It is a somewhat more tolerable error that you have made that part of the soul of the world that permeates the sea into your god Neptune. But is the wave which comes to the shore and then returns to the sea two parts of the world, or two parts of the soul of the world? Which of you is so foolish as to think that this is not foolish? Why, therefore, have the Romans made two goddesses for you? Only because your wise forefathers have provided not that more gods should rule you, but that more demons should possess you: demons who take delight in such vanities and falsehoods! But why has that Salacia, according to this interpretation, lost the lower part of the sea, where she was placed under her husband? For when you say that she is the wave that goes out, you place her on the surface. Is it, perhaps, that she is angry with her husband for taking

Venilia as a mistress, and so has excluded him from the upper parts of the sea?

23 Of the earth, which Varro affirms to be a goddess, since the soul of the world, which is in his opinion God, permeates even this lowest part of its own body and imparts a divine force to it

To be sure, there is only one earth, and we see it to be full of its own creatures; yet it is also a great mass among the elements, and the lowest part of the world. Why, then, do our adversaries wish to say that it is a goddess? Is it because it is fruitful? Why, in that case, are men not divine instead? – for it is they who make the earth fruitful by their cultivation: but by ploughing it, not adoring it. They say, however, that part of the soul of the world permeates the earth and makes it a goddess: as if it were not more evident, as a thing quite beyond question, that there is a soul in man; yet men are not held to be gods. Indeed – and this is to be more grievously lamented – men are, by a wondrous and miserable error, placed under beings who, though deemed worthy of worship and adoration, are not gods, and than whom men themselves are better.

Certainly, Varro, in his book concerning the select gods, affirms that there are three grades of soul in the whole of nature. First, there is that which occurs in all the parts of a living body, and which has no sensation, but the power of life only. He says that this force in our bodies permeates the bones, the nails and the hair. By it, trees are nourished in the world, and grow even though they have no sensation, and live in a manner peculiar to themselves. The second grade of soul is that in which there is sensation; and this power extends to the eyes, ears, nose mouth and sense of touch. The third grade of soul is the highest, and is called mind; and, here, intelligence prevails. All mortal creatures apart from man lack this grade of soul. This part of the soul of the world, Varro says, is called God, while in us it is called genius. Moreover, the stones and the earth which we see in the world, to which sensation does not extend, are like the bones and nails of God; whereas the sun, the moon and the stars that we perceive, and by which He perceives, are His senses. Again, the aether is His mind, the force of which, extending to the stars, makes them also gods. That part of it which

flows through them into the earth makes the goddess Tellus, and that which flows still farther, into the sea and ocean, makes the god Neptune.

Let Varro return, therefore, from that which he supposes to be natural theology, to which he retired to rest when he grew weary of the twistings and turnings of his argument: let him return, I say; let him return to the civil theology, where I shall detain him for a little while in order to deal with it. I do not yet say that if the earth and stones resemble our bones and nails, they must resemble them in having no intelligence, just as they lack sensation. Nor do I say that, if our bones and nails are said to have intelligence because they are in a man who has intelligence, he who says that these parts of the world are gods is as stupid as anyone would be who said that the bones and nails in us are men. These are points which are, perhaps, to be discussed with the philosophers. For the time being, however, I wish to approach him as a political man. For, though he may seem to have wished to lift up his head for a moment, as it were, into the freedom of natural theology, it is possible that, while still occupied with this book, and concerned with its execution, he nonetheless glanced aside and spoke as he did in order that no one should believe that his ancestors or other cities had been foolish in worshipping Tellus and Neptune.

I say this, then: if there is a part of the soul of the world which permeates the earth, and there is only one earth, why has it not also made only one goddess, the one whom Varro calls Tellus? In which case, where will Orcus be, the brother of Jupiter and Neptune, whom the Romans call Dis Pater? Where will his wife Proserpine be, who, according to another opinion of Varro, set forth in the same book, is not the fertility of the earth, but its lowest part? And if our adversaries say that a part of the soul of the world makes the god Dis Pater when it permeates the upper part of the earth and the goddess Proserpine when it permeates the lower part, what will that Tellus be? For the whole of what Tellus was has now been divided into two parts and two gods, so that that no one can discover what or where a third part may be: unless, that is, someone says that the two divine beings Orcus and Proserpine form the one goddess Tellus, and that they are not now three, but one or two. Nonetheless, they are still called three. They are held to be three, worshipped as three with their own altars, their own shrines, their

own rites, images and priests, and, by the same token, their own false demons who through these things defile the prostituted soul.

Let our adversaries answer a further question: what part of the earth is permeated by a part of the soul of the world to form the god Tellumo? None, says Varro; rather, one and the same earth has a dual power: a masculine, which produces seed, and a feminine, which receives and nourishes it. Hence, it is called Tellus from the female power and Tellumo from the male. Why, therefore, did the pontiffs, as Varro himself indicates, add two more and perform divine service to four gods: Tellus, Tellumo, Altor and Rusor? We have already spoken of Tellus and Tellumo; but why Altor? Because, Varro says, it is from the earth that all things born are nourished [*aluntur*]. And why Rusor? Because, he says, all things return again [*rursus*] to the same place.

24 Of the additional names of Tellus and their meanings, which, though they signify many things, should not be thought to confirm the opinion that there are many gods

By reason of this fourfold power, therefore, the one earth ought to have had four additional names, but not to have been made into four gods. The one Jupiter has many titles, and the one Juno has many titles, in all of which the manifold powers belonging to a single god or goddess are said to be expressed. This multitude of titles does not, however, make a multitude of gods. But just as sometimes the vilest women grow weary and repent of the hordes of lovers whom they have sought in their lust, so the soul which has become vile and prostituted itself to unclean spirits, and which loves to multiply for itself gods to whom it may prostrate itself in unclean worship, sometimes also grows weary of them. For even Varro himself, as though ashamed of the swarm of divine beings, wished there to be the one goddess, Tellus. 'They say', he remarks,

that the same goddess is called the Great Mother. The drum which she holds signifies that she is the orb of the earth; the towers on her head signify towns; and she is portrayed as seated because, while all things around her move, she herself is not moved. The Romans created the Galli to serve this goddess;

and this signifies that those who lack seed should devote themselves to the earth, for all seeds are indeed found in the earth. They leap about before her, in order to teach those who cultivate the earth that they should not sit idle, for there is always something for them to do. The sound of the cymbals signifies the action of metal tools and the work of men's hands and the other noises produced by the business of tilling the fields. These cymbals are made of bronze because the men of old tilled the land with bronze before iron was discovered. They place beside her a lion,

he says, 'unloosed and tame, in order to show that there is no kind of land so remote or so fiercely wild that it is not suitable to be tamed and brought under cultivation'.

Varro then goes on to say that, because they gave many names and titles to Mother Tellus, it came to be believed that there were many gods. 'They think', he says, 'that Tellus is Ops, because she is improved by work [*opus*]; Mother, because she gives birth to many things; Great, because she gives birth to food; Proserpine, because fruits creep forth [*proserpant*] from her; Vesta, because she has a vesture of grass. And there are other goddesses', he says, 'who are not unreasonably identified with her'. If, therefore, the earth is one goddess (although, if we consult the truth, this is certainly not the case), why do they nonetheless divide her into many? Let there be many names for one goddess, and not as many goddesses as there are names. But the authority of his mistaken forebears weighs heavily upon Varro, and compels him to have misgivings after he has expressed this opinion. For he then says in addition: 'The opinion of our forebears concerning these goddesses, whom they suppose to be many, is not at odds with these remarks.' But how is it not at odds with them, when it is a very different thing for one goddess to have many names and for there to be many goddesses? 'But it is possible', he says, 'for the same thing to be one, yet to have many things contained in it'. There are, I grant, many things in one man; but are there for this reason many men in him? So too, if there are many things in one goddess, are there for this reason many goddesses? But let them divide, combine, multiply, replicate and complicate as they wish.

Such are the celebrated mysteries of Tellus and the Great Mother, in which everything has reference to perishable seeds and

to the practice of agriculture. But do the things related to this end – the drum, the towers, the Galli, the insane thrashing of limbs, the noise of the cymbals, the images of lions – give anyone the promise of eternal life? The mutilated Galli serve the Great Mother in order to signify that those who lack seed ought to devote themselves to the earth. But is it not their own very devotion which has caused them to lack seed? For do they acquire seed when they lack it by following after the goddess? Or do they, rather, by following her, lose the seed that they have? Is this an interpretation of her rites, or an indictment of them? Nor do our adversaries notice how great is the triumph of the malignant demons who have managed to exact such cruel rites without having to promise any great rewards in return. If the earth had not been a goddess, men would have laid their hands upon her in order to obtain seed from her by labour, and not upon themselves, in order to lose their seed for her sake. If the earth had not been a goddess, she would have been made fruitful by the hands of others. She would not have compelled a man to be made barren by his own hands. In the festival of Liber, before the gaze of the multitude, an honest matron would crown the shameful parts of a male, while perhaps her husband stood there also – blushing and perspiring, if there is any shame in mankind. At the celebration of a wedding, the new bride would be required to sit upon the shaft of Priapus. But these two things are no more than contemptible and trivial when compared with the most wicked cruelty of the rites of Tellus. In the former instances, both sexes were mocked by demonic rituals, but neither was destroyed. In the first of them, men feared the enchantment of their fields; but, in the rites of Tellus, they do not fear even the amputation of their members! In the second of them, the modesty of the new bride was dishonoured, but no damage was done to her fruitfulness, or even her virginity; whereas, in the rites of Tellus, a man's virility is amputated, and he neither becomes a woman nor remains a man.

25 The interpretation of the mutilation of Attis as presented in the doctrine of the Greek sages

Varro does not mention Attis, in commemoration of whose love the Galli mutilate themselves; nor does he seek any interpretation of him. The learned and wise Greeks, however, have by no means

omitted to speak of something so holy and celebrated. Because the face of the earth is more beautiful in spring than at any other season, the noble philosopher Porphyry suggests that Attis symbolises the flowers, and that his mutilation signifies the fact the flowers must fall before the fruit comes. It is not the man himself, therefore – or the symbolic man whom they call Attis – whom they have compared to the flowers, but his male organs. These, indeed, fell while he was still alive; or, rather, they did not fall, nor were they plucked, but were clearly torn off. But when that flower was lost, there was no subsequent fruit; rather, barrenness followed. What, then, is the meaning of this remnant – of whatever remained after his mutilation? What is it said to signify? To what does it refer? What interpretation is offered of it? Do not the Greeks' fruitless attempts to find an interpretation simply persuade us that what rumour reports and writing records is no more than the tale of a castrated man? Though so learned a man as Varro was surely not unaware of this tale, he rightly turned away from it, and did not wish to speak of it.

26 Of the wickedness of the rites of the Great Mother

Again, Varro did not wish to say anything of the effeminate men consecrated, against all male and female decency, to the same Great Mother; nor do I remember reading of them elsewhere. As late as yesterday, though, they were parading through the squares and streets of Carthage, with oiled hair and powdered faces, languid limbs and feminine gait, demanding even from the tradespeople the means of continuing to live in disgrace.²⁴ Interpretation failed; reason blushed; speech was silenced. The Great Mother has surpassed all her children in the greatness not of her godhood, but of her iniquity. To this monster, not even the monstrousness of Janus is to be compared. Janus had a deformity only in his image; but she has a deformity in her cruel rites: Janus had parts added to him in stone; but she has men whose fleshly members have been taken away. This abomination is not surpassed even by the whoredoms of Jupiter himself, so many and so great. Though he corrupted so

²⁴ Cf. Ovid, *Fast.*, 4,351f; Tertullian, *Apol.*, 13.

many women, it was only through Ganymede that he brought infamy into heaven; whereas the Great Mother, with so many effeminate men making a public exhibition of themselves, has brought iniquity to earth and done injury to heaven also. Perhaps we might compare Saturn to her in respect of such abominable cruelty, or even place him before her, for it is said that he castrated his own father. In the rites of Saturn, however, though men could be slain by the hands of others, they were not called upon to mutilate themselves. Saturn devoured his children, as the poets tell; and the natural philosophers interpret this story in whatever way they wish. As the story goes, he killed them; but the Carthaginian practice of sacrificing their children to him was not accepted by the Romans. This Great Mother of the gods, however, has brought her eunuchs even into the Roman temples, and has preserved that cruel practice, because it is believed that she adds to the might of the Romans by cutting off the sexual organs of her men!

Compared to this evil, what are the thefts of Mercury, the lasciviousness of Venus, the immorality and wickedness of the rest, which we could cite from books even if they were not daily sung and danced in the theatres? What are these compared to so great an evil, the magnitude of which is matched only by the greatness of the Great Mother? – especially since the deeds of Mercury, Venus and the rest are said to have been the inventions of the poets. The poets did not, however, invent the fact that their accounts of such deeds are pleasing and acceptable to the gods. For even if it is due to the audacity and wantonness of the poets that these things were sung or written, still, when they were added to the divine rites and honours at the command and insistence of the divine beings themselves, what was this, if not a criminal act of the gods – or, rather, a confession on the part of the demons and a deception of miserable men? But as to the belief that the Great Mother is properly worshipped by the consecration to her of mutilated men: the poets did not invent this; rather, they shrank from it in horror rather than singing of it.

Why should it be thought, then, that anyone consecrated to these select gods will live a blessed life after death, when, subjected to vile superstitions and obliged to serve unclean demons, he cannot live honestly even before his death? But all these things, Varro says, have reference to the world [*mundus*]. Let him consider whether

they do not rather refer to the unclean [*immundus*]. Moreover, there is, surely, nothing in the world which cannot be referred to the world in this way. We, however, seek a mind which, confiding in the true religion, does not adore the world as its god, but praises the world as God's work for God's sake: a mind which, cleansed of all worldly defilements, comes pure to God Himself, Who established the world.

27 Of the inventions of the natural philosophers,
who neither worship the true Divinity nor cultivate
that worship by which the true God should be
served

We see that these select gods came to enjoy greater renown than the rest: not, however, in order that their merits might be glorified, but so that their disgraceful acts should not be concealed; and, from this consideration, it is all the more credible that they were once men. This is handed down to us not only in the writings of the poets, but also in the works of the historians. For Virgil says: 'Saturn was the first to come down from the heights of Olympus, fleeing the arms of Jupiter, an exile robbed of his kingdom.'²⁵ And the whole history of what follows in relation to this affair is told by Euhemerus, and has been translated into Latin by Ennius. But since many things have been said by those who have written before us in both the Greek language and the Latin against errors of this kind, I do not think it necessary to dwell on them here.

But when I consider the naturalistic explanations by which learned and acute men endeavour to turn these human affairs into things divine, I see nothing except what can be attributed to temporal and earthly works, and to corporeal beings, invisible, perhaps, but still subject to change; and these are in no way the true God. Now if this symbolism were executed in a manner at least compatible with religion, it would indeed be lamentable that the true God is not declared and proclaimed through it, but we might endure it nonetheless: we might endure it if only such filthy and wicked things were not done or commanded by means of it. But since it is a crime to worship a body or a soul in place of the true God, by

²⁵ *Aen.*, 8,319f.

Whose indwelling alone the soul is made happy, how much more criminal is it to worship these things in such a way that neither the body nor the soul of the worshipper may obtain either salvation or human honour! Thus, if some element of the world, or some created spirit – even though not impure or evil – is worshipped with the temple, priesthood and sacrifice due to the true God, the worship is evil, not because the means by which it is performed are evil, but because such means ought to be used only in the worship of Him to whom alone such worship and service is due.

But if anyone contends that he is worshipping the one true God – that is, the Creator of every soul and body – with lumpish and monstrous images, with homicidal sacrifices, with the crowning of the shameful parts of the male, with prostitution for a fee, with the slashing of limbs, the cutting off of genitals, the consecration of the effeminate, the performance of impure and obscene spectacles: such a one does not sin because he worships what ought not to be worshipped; rather, he sins by worshipping Him Who ought to be worshipped in a way in which He ought not to be worshipped. If, however, anyone makes use of such things – that is, base and wicked things – to worship not the true God Who is the Maker of soul and body, but a creature, even though not a wicked creature, he sins against God twice: first, because he worships, in place of God, that which is not God, whether it be a soul or a body or a soul and a body together; and, second, because he worships by means of things which should not be used to worship either God or that which is not God.

But it is clear how – that is, how wickedly and criminally – our adversaries worship. What or whom they worship might have remained hidden, had not their own histories attested that those very services which are admitted to be filthy and disgraceful were rendered to divine beings who demanded them with terrible threats. As it is, however, all ambiguity is removed: it is evil demons and unclean spirits who have been invited, by all this civil theology, to visit senseless images and, by means of them, to take possession of foolish hearts.

28 That the teaching of Varro concerning theology is
in no respect consistent with itself

What does it avail, then, that this most learned and acute man Varro should endeavour with such subtle disputation to reduce and refer all these gods to heaven and earth? He cannot do it. They flow out of his hands, they recoil, they sink and fall. When he is about to speak of females, that is, goddesses, he says:

As I said in the first book, dealing with places, heaven and earth are the two origins of the gods, which is why some gods are called heavenly and some earthly. I began the former book with heaven, when I spoke of Janus, whom some have said to be the heaven, and others the earth. Now, therefore, in speaking of female deities, I make a beginning with Tellus.

I know how great a perplexity this greatly gifted man was suffering. For he is led by a certain kind of verisimilitude to suppose that the heaven is that which acts and the earth that which is acted upon; and so he attributes a masculine power to the former and a feminine to the latter. But he does not notice that it is rather He Who made both heaven and earth Who is the maker of both activity and passivity. Hence also, in the preceding book, Varro similarly interprets the celebrated mysteries of the Samothracians, and promises, almost with religious fervour, that he will expound in writing and send to his countrymen mysteries unknown to them.²⁶ For he says that he had discovered in Samothrace, from many indications, that one of the images there signified the heaven, another the earth, and another the forms of things which Plato calls ideas. Varro wishes it to be understood that Jupiter is the heaven, Juno the earth, and Minerva the ideas: heaven being that by which anything is made; earth being that of which it is made; and the ideas being the form according to which it is made. I omit to mention the fact that Plato says that the ideas have such great power that even the heaven was made according to them: it was not the heaven that made anything patterned on them. I do, however, remark that, in his book on the select gods, Varro has lost sight of the three gods in whom he has, as it were, embraced all things. For he assigns the male gods to heaven and the female to earth, and he places among the latter Minerva, whom

²⁶ Cf. *De ling. Lat.*, 5,58; Cicero, *De nat. deor.*, 1,42,119; Herodotus, 2,51.

he had formerly set above them. Next, the male god Neptune is in the sea, which pertains to earth rather than heaven. Finally, Dis Pater, who is called Pluto by the Greeks, is himself male and the brother of the other two; yet he is considered to be an earth god, holding the higher part of the earth and having a wife, Proserpine, in the lower part. How is it, then, that Varro can attempt to identify the gods with heaven and the goddesses with the earth? What does his argument contain which is solid, constant, sober or definite?

This Tellus is the origin of the goddesses, then: the Great Mother, that is, before whom arise the mad and wicked cries of the effeminate and mutilated, and of those who slash themselves and leap about. How is it, therefore, that Janus is called the head of the gods and Tellus that of the goddesses? In the one case, error does not make a single head, nor, in the other, does frenzy make a sane one. Why do our adversaries foolishly strive to equate these with the world? Even if they could do this, no pious man worships the world in place of the true God; but, in any case, the clear truth demonstrates that they cannot do it. Let them rather refer all this to dead men and to most wicked demons, and then no doubt will remain.

**29 That all the things which the natural philosophers
have referred to the world and its parts should be
ascribed to the one true God**

For everything in the theology of those gods which our adversaries ascribe to the world by means of naturalistic explanations may, without any fear of sacrilegious opinion, instead be ascribed to the one true God, Who made the world, and Who is the Creator of every soul and every body. We may express it thus: we worship not heaven and earth, of which two things this world consists, nor a soul or souls thought to be diffused throughout all living things, but the God Who made heaven and earth and all the things in them, and Who made every soul, no matter what the manner of its life: whether it lacks both sensation and reason, or only sensation, or only intelligence.

30 With what piety the Creator is to be distinguished from His creatures, lest, instead of one God, as many creatures be worshipped as there are works of the one Creator

I shall now begin to run through those works of the one and true God by reason of which our adversaries have made for themselves many false gods, whose most wicked and shameful rites they endeavour to interpret as though they were honourable. We worship the God who has assigned to all the natures created by Him both the beginnings and the ends of their existing and moving; Who holds, knows and disposes the causes of things; Who has established the power of seeds; Who has endued those living creatures whom He has chosen with the rational soul which is called mind; Who has given us the faculty and use of speech; Who has imparted the gift of foretelling the future to such spirits as He has deemed worthy; Who also Himself foretells the future through those whom He thinks fit, and Who takes away disease through those who please Him. When the human race is to be corrected and chastised by war, He governs the beginning, the course and the end of such war; He has created and He rules the most fearsome and violent fire of this world, which He governs as part of immeasurable nature; and He is the Creator and Governor of all the waters.

He made the sun to be the brightest of all corporeal lights, and gave it force and motion. He has not withdrawn His lordship and power even from those in the underworld. He has assigned their proper seeds and foods, whether dry or liquid, to mortal natures. He establishes the earth and makes it fruitful. He bestows its fruits upon animals and men. He knows and ordains not only principal causes, but also secondary ones. He has established the course of the moon. He provides pathways in heaven and on earth for passage from one place to another. To the human intellect which He created He has also granted a knowledge of the various arts which minister to life and nature. He has appointed the union of male and female to bring about the propagation of offspring. He has bestowed the gift of earthly fire, to be employed in the homes of men as a ready source of heat and light.

These, then, are the things which that most acute and learned man Varro has laboured to distribute among the select gods by I

know not what naturalistic explanations, whether he has borrowed these from elsewhere or conjectured them for himself. All these things, however, are made and performed by the one true God, but as God: that is, He is wholly everywhere; not enclosed in any place or confined by any bond; not divisible into parts; not changeable in any part; filling heaven and earth with present power; and with a nature which lacks nothing. And so He directs all the things which He has created in such a way that they may perform and exercise their own proper movements. For although they can be nothing without Him, they are not what He is. He also does many things by means of the angels; but it is only through Himself that He makes the angels blessed. So again, though He sends the angels to men in certain cases, He does not bless men by the angels, but by Himself, as He does the angels themselves.

31 What special benefits of God, apart from His general bounty, are available to those who seek the truth

But apart from benefits of this kind, which, according to His regulation of nature, God bestows upon the good and evil alike,²⁷ of which fact we have said not a little, we have much proof also of His great love, which belongs only to the good. Certainly, we can never give thanks to Him enough for the fact that we live, that we behold heaven and earth, and that we possess the mind and reason by which we seek to know Him Who created all these things. But more than this: when we were burdened and overwhelmed with sins, turned away from the contemplation of His light and blinded by the love of darkness, that is, of iniquity, He did not wholly desert us. Rather, He sent to us His own Word, Who is His only Son, so that, by His birth and suffering in the flesh which He assumed for our sakes, we might know How highly God prized man; and so that, by His one sacrifice, we might be cleansed of all our sins; and so that, love being shed abroad in our hearts through His Spirit, and all our trials being thereby overcome, we might come into eternal rest and the ineffable sweetness of contemplating Him. What

²⁷ Cf. Matt. 5.45.

hearts, what tongues, can claim that they are sufficient to give thanks to Him for all this?

**32 That the sacrament of Christ's redemption was
never lacking in times past, but was at all times
proclaimed by various signs**

This mystery of eternal life was, through certain signs and symbols, proclaimed by the angels from the very beginning of the human race to those who were intended to know it. Next, the Hebrew people was called together into one commonwealth, as it were, to enact this mystery; and to them was foretold – sometimes by men who spoke with understanding, and sometimes by those who did so in ignorance – all that would be accomplished from the coming of Christ up till now and in time to come. The same race has subsequently been scattered among the nations, in order to bear witness to the Scriptures in which the eternal salvation which was to come through Christ was foretold. For not only all the prophecies which are given in words; and not only all the precepts of life which shape morals and piety and which are contained in those writings; but also the worship, the priesthood, the tabernacle or temple, the altars, sacrifices, ceremonies, feast days and whatever else pertains to that service which is due to God and properly called *latreia* in Greek: all these things symbolised and foretold those things which, for the sake of eternal life for the faithful in Christ, we believe to be fulfilled, or which we see in the course of fulfilment, or the fulfilment of which we trustingly await.

**33 That only through the Christian religion could
the falsehoods of the malignant spirits who rejoice in
the errors of men have been revealed**

It was, therefore, only through this one and true religion that the gods of the nations could be revealed as most unclean demons: demons who, in the guise of spirits of the dead, or under the appearance of creatures of this world, desire to be thought gods. Proud of their own impurity, they rejoice in wicked and shameful things as though they were divine honours, and they envy human

souls their conversion to the true God. From their most cruel and ungodly dominion man is set free when he believes in Him Who, to raise man up, offered an example of humility as great as the pride by which they fell.

Among the demons are not only those gods of whom we have already said so much, and the other Roman gods also, and still others belonging to other nations and lands, but also those of whom we are treating now, who have been selected, as it were, into the senate of the gods: but clearly selected for the notoriousness of their crimes, not for the dignity of their virtue. When Varro, seeking to make wicked things honest, endeavours to refer the rites of these gods to what purport to be naturalistic explanations, he cannot find a way to reconcile and harmonise the two; for those things which he thinks, or wishes to be thought, the reasons for those rites are not so. Had not only these, but also whatever other explanations there were of the same kind, been the true ones, then, even though they had nothing to do with the true God or with that eternal life which is to be sought in religion, they would, by furnishing a reason of some kind, derived from the nature of things, at any rate have mitigated in some small degree the offence given by any wicked or absurd aspects exhibited by the rites when their meaning was not understood. Varro endeavoured to do this in relation to certain of the fables of the theatres or mysteries of the shrines. But he did not acquit the theatres of similarity to the temples; rather, he condemned the temples for their resemblance to the theatres. Nonetheless, he in some way attempted, by presenting what he supposed to be naturalistic explanations, to soothe the sensibilities offended by such horrible things.

34 Of the books of Numa Pompilius, which the Senate ordered to be burned lest the reasons for the sacred rites described in them should become known

By contrast, however, and as the same most learned man has related, we find that the explanations of the sacred rites given in the books of Numa Pompilius could by no means be tolerated, and were considered unworthy not only of being read and known by religious persons, but even of lying hidden in the darkness where they had been concealed. I shall now say what I promised to say in the third

book of this work.²⁸ For, as we read in the same Varro's book *De cultu deorum*,

A certain Terentius had a field on the Janiculum, and, when his ploughman was ploughing close to the sepulchre of Numa Pompilius, the plough turned up from the ground the king's books, in which were written down the reasons for the sacred institutions. He took these to the praetor in the city. He, having perused the first part, referred so important a matter to the Senate. But when the leading senators had read some of the reasons given as to why each part of the sacred rites had been instituted, the Senate declared itself in agreement with the dead Numa, and the assembled fathers, as religious men, required the praetor to burn those same books.²⁹

Let each man believe as he sees fit; indeed, let every egregious defender of such impiety say whatever mad contentiousness may suggest. For my part, it is enough to point out that the reasons for those rites, as written down by King Pompilius himself, the founder of the rites, were not fit to become known to the people, the Senate, or even to the priests themselves. Numa Pompilius had attained to these secrets of the demons by an unlawful curiosity, and had written them down so that he might be able, by reading, to be reminded of them. But though he was a king, and therefore had no reason at all to be afraid, he neither dared to teach them to anyone, nor to destroy them by obliterating them or by some other form of destruction. He was unwilling that anyone should know them, lest men be taught infamous things, yet he was afraid to harm them, lest the demons be angered; and so he buried them where he thought that it would be safe to do so, believing that no plough could come near his tomb. But the Senate, though they feared to condemn the religion of their ancestors, and were to that extent compelled to declare themselves in agreement with Numa's action, nonetheless judged those books to be so pernicious that they did not even command them to be buried again, lest human curiosity should be so much the more eager to search for a thing brought forth once. Rather, they ordered the accursed relics to be destroyed by fire. For, though they deemed that it was now necessary to go

²⁸ Bk III,9.

²⁹ Cf. Livy, 40,29; Plutarch, *Numa*, 22; Pliny, 13,13,84ff.

on performing those sacred rites, they considered it more tolerable that men should err without knowing the causes than that the city should be disturbed by knowledge of them.

35 Of hydromancy, by which Numa was deluded when he saw certain images of the demons

Numa himself, to whom no prophet of God and no holy angel was sent, was compelled to practise hydromancy, and saw in the water the images of gods, or, rather, the mocking images of demons, from whom he heard what rites he should establish and observe. Divination of this kind, Varro says, was introduced from the Persians; and he records its use by Numa himself, and later by the philosopher Pythagoras. He says that such divination also makes use of blood to enquire of the inhabitants of the underworld, and that this practice is called *nekromantia* in Greek. But whether called hydromancy or necromancy, it is the same thing, in that the dead seem to prophesy. By what arts such things are done, however, let our adversaries consider for themselves. I will not say that these arts were prohibited by law in the cities of the Gentiles, and punished by the heaviest penalties, before the advent of our Saviour: this, I say, I will not assert; for perhaps such things were then lawful. It was, however, by these arts that Pompilius learned the sacred rites. Then, so greatly did he fear what he had learned, he published the fact of those rites but buried their reasons; and when the books containing these reasons were unearthed, the Senate burned them. What is it to me, then, that Varro should offer I know not what other, supposedly naturalistic, explanations of these rites? If Numa's books had themselves contained explanations of this naturalistic kind, they surely would not have been burned; or else the assembled fathers would, by the same token, have burned the books which Varro published also, even though they were dedicated to the pontiff Caesar.

According to the explanation given in the book of Varro cited above, the belief that Numa Pompilius took the nymph Egeria as his wife owes its origin to the fact that he drew [*egerere*], that is, carried away, water to perform hydromancy. It is in this way that established facts are turned into fables by a sprinkling of lies. It was by hydromancy, then, that the most inquisitive of Roman kings

learned the rites which the pontiffs were to have in their books, and also the reasons for them, which he desired that no one should know but himself. He took care, therefore, to have these written down separately, and so made them die with him, as it were, and be buried, and so be withdrawn from the knowledge of men. These writings, then, either described the sordid and noxious lusts of the demons in a way that would make the whole of civil theology appear execrable even to men who had adopted so many shameful things into their sacred rites; or else all the gods, whom almost all the nations of the Gentiles had for so long believed to be immortal, were there revealed as nothing more than dead men. But those same demons took delight in such rites, through which they themselves were worshipped in place of those dead men whom, by means of the testimony of false miracles, they had caused to be regarded as gods.

By the hidden providence of the true God, however, it came to pass that these demons were permitted to confess all these things to their ally Pompilius, having been won over by his practice of the necromantic arts. They were not, however, permitted to warn him that he should rather burn than bury his books before he died. Nor were they able to prevent them from becoming known by resisting either the plough that uncovered them or the pen of Varro through which the record of these events has come down to our own time. For they cannot do what they are not permitted to do; and it is only by the supreme and just judgment of almighty God that men are allowed to be afflicted by them according to their deserts, or, indeed, to be conquered and deluded by them. But how pernicious those writings were judged to be, and how alien to the worship of true divinity, can be gathered from the fact that the Senate preferred rather to burn what Pompilius had hidden than to fear what he feared when he did not dare to do so.

Let him, therefore, who does not wish to have a godly manner of life even in this world seek life eternal through such rites. But let him who does not seek the fellowship of malign demons have no fear of the noxious superstition by which they are worshipped; rather, let him acknowledge the true religion by which they are exposed and vanquished.

Book VIII

I Of the need to discuss the natural theology with those philosophers who are more distinguished in knowledge than the rest

We now have need of a far greater effort of mind than was necessary in solving and explaining the questions raised in our previous books; for it is not with ordinary men that we are now to discuss the theology which the Romans call natural. This is unlike both the mythical theology and the civil – that is, the theatrical theology and the urban, the one of which displays the crimes of the gods, while the other demonstrates their still more criminal desires. Thus, it is with the philosophers that we must here have converse, whose very name, if it is translated into Latin, attests to their love of wisdom.

Moreover, if God, by Whom all things were made, is wisdom, as the divine authority and truth have shown, then the true philosopher is a lover of God.¹ But the thing itself whose name this is does not reside in all who glory in that name; for it does not follow that those who are called philosophers are lovers of true wisdom. Clearly, then, we must select from all those whose written opinions we have been able to study those with whom this question may be not unworthily discussed. For I have not undertaken this work in order to refute the vain opinions of all the philosophers, but only those whose opinions have to do with theology (which Greek word we understand to signify reason or discourse concerning divinity); and not, indeed, all of those. I deal only with those philosophers who, though they agree that a divine nature exists and concerns itself with human affairs, nonetheless do not believe that it is sufficient to worship one immutable God in order to achieve a blessed life even after death; but who hold that we must worship many gods created and established by Him.

The opinion of these philosophers is closer to the truth even than that of Varro. For, whereas Varro was able to conceive of natural theology as extending only to the world and the soul of the world, they confess a God Who is above all that belongs to the nature of the soul. They confess a God Who made not only this visible world,

¹ Cf. *Wisd.* 7,24ff.

which is often called heaven and earth, but also every soul whatever, and Who makes the rational and intellectual soul, of which kind is that of human beings, blessed by participation in His unchangeable and incorporeal light. There is no one with even a tenuous knowledge of these matters who does not know of these Platonic philosophers, whose name is derived from that of their teacher Plato. As to this Plato, then, I shall touch briefly upon the points which I consider necessary to the present question, first mentioning those who preceded him in time within the same field of enquiry.

2 Of two schools of philosophy, that is, the Italian and the Ionian, and their founders

As touching the literature of the Greeks, whose language is held in higher esteem than that of any other nation, we gather that there are two schools of philosophy. The one, the Italian, comes from that part of Italy which was formerly called *Magna Graecia*; and the other, the Ionian, from those lands which are still known as Greece. The Italian school had as its founder Pythagoras of Samos, to whom also the word 'philosophy' is said to owe its origin. Before his time, those who were seen to stand out from others by reason of their praiseworthy mode of life were called sages; but when Pythagoras was asked what his profession was, he replied that he was a philosopher: that is, a student or lover of wisdom; for it seemed to him most presumptuous to claim to be a sage.

The founder of the Ionian school, on the other hand, was Thales of Miletus, one of those who were called the Seven Sages. The other six were distinguished by their mode of life and by certain precepts having to do with the good life. Thales, however, investigated the nature of things, and recorded his discoveries in writing for the sake of those who came after him. What made him especially eminent was his ability to predict eclipses of the sun, and of the moon also, through his understanding of astronomical calculation. He thought, moreover, that water is the first principle of things, and that from it originate all the elements of the world, the world itself, and those things which come into being in the world. He did not, however, postulate that this achievement, this world which seems so marvellous when we contemplate it, is governed by a divine mind.

His student Anaximander succeeded him, and he held a different

opinion as to the nature of things. For he did not believe that all things come forth from one first principle, as Thales had, in proposing moisture; rather, he thought that each individual thing arises from its own proper principle. He believed that these principles of things are infinite in number, and he thought that they bring innumerable worlds into being, and all the things which arise in them. He thought also that these worlds are continually subject to a process of alternately passing away and coming into being, with each one remaining in being for as long as is possible for it. He again did not attribute any part of the working of these things to a divine intelligence.

He left as his successor his pupil Anaximenes, who attributed all the causes of things to boundless air. Anaximenes did not deny or ignore the existence of gods. He believed, however, that they were not the creators of air, but were themselves derived from air. Next, Anaximenes's student Anaxagoras held and taught that there is a divine mind which brings into being all that we see, using infinite matter consisting of particles of every thing, each one of which is similar to every other. On this view, each substance is made out of particles of its own kind, but with the divine mind as its maker. Diogenes also, another student of Anaximenes, said that air is indeed the material of which all things are made, but that it partakes of divine reason, without which nothing could be made from it.

Anaxagoras was succeeded by his student Archelaus. The latter also held that each individual thing is composed of particles every one of which is similar to every other. But he held also that there is an indwelling mind which brings everything to pass by conjoining and dispersing eternal bodies, that is, those particles. Socrates, Plato's master, is said to have been a pupil of Archelaus; and it is in order to lead up to Plato that I have summarised these facts.

3 Of the Socratic teaching

Socrates, then, is remembered as the first to direct the entire effort of philosophy towards the correction and regulation of morals, whereas all his predecessors had devoted their efforts specifically to the investigation of the physical world, that is, of nature. It does not seem to me possible to decide clearly why Socrates did this. Perhaps it was because he was weary of obscure and uncertain

things and so applied his mind to the discovery of something clear and certain which might be necessary to the happy life, for the sake of which, it seems, the tireless and laborious efforts of all the philosophers have been made. Or, as some persons more benevolently believe of him, perhaps it was because he did not wish to see minds sullied by earthly desires endeavouring to extend themselves to things divine. For he saw them inquiring into the causes of things; but he believed that the first and highest causes exist in nothing but the will of the one true and supreme God. He therefore thought that these could not be comprehended other than by a mind which has been cleansed. And so he held that men ought to devote their efforts to the purification of life through good morals, so that the mind, relieved of the oppressive burden of lusts, might by its natural vigour raise itself up into the realm of eternal things and contemplate, in purity of understanding, the nature of that incorporeal and changeless light in which the causes of all created natures have their unwavering abode.

It is at any rate well known that, with a wonderful grace of argument and the most acute wit, he would hound and pursue the folly of ignorant men who thought that they possessed some knowledge. He would do this precisely in relation to those moral questions to which he seemed to have devoted his whole mind. And he would do so either by confessing ignorance or concealing his own knowledge. It was in this way that he stirred up the hostility as a result of which he was falsely accused, condemned and sentenced to death. Subsequently, however, that very city of the Athenians which had publicly condemned him also publicly mourned him. Indeed, popular indignation so greatly turned against his two accusers that one of them was set upon and slain by the violence of the mob, while the other evaded a similar punishment only by going voluntarily into perpetual exile.

Outstanding in his fame, therefore, both in life and in death, Socrates left behind many exponents of his philosophy, who vied with one another in their enthusiasm for debating those moral questions which have to do with the supreme good by which man is made happy. In the discussions of Socrates, however, where he advances and maintains and demolishes all manner of propositions, what he himself understands the supreme good to be does not clearly appear. Thus, everyone took from those discussions

whatever pleased him, and each placed the final good in whatever it seemed to him to consist. The expression 'final good' denotes that by which, when he has arrived at it, each man is made happy. But the followers of Socrates maintained such a diversity of opinions among themselves that – scarcely credible as this may seem among adherents of one master – some, such as Aristippus, said that pleasure is the supreme good, whereas others, such as Antisthenes, held that it is virtue. So numerous were the opinions of the various disciples that it would take too long to mention all of them.

4 Of Plato, the most distinguished of the pupils of Socrates, who divided philosophy as a whole into three departments

But among the pupils of Socrates the one who shone with a glory so illustrious that he entirely eclipsed all the others, and not, indeed, unworthily, was Plato. He was an Athenian by birth, of honourable standing among his countrymen, and he far surpassed his fellow pupils in his marvellous natural talent. He believed, however, that his own understanding and the teaching of Socrates were not sufficient to carry the study of philosophy to perfection; and so he travelled as far and as widely as he could, to anywhere noted for the excellence of any kind of knowledge which he might acquire. Thus, he went even to Egypt, and studied whatever great things were held and taught there. Thence, he came to those parts of Italy where the fame of the Pythagoreans was celebrated, and there, studying under the most distinguished teachers, he very easily mastered whatever in Italian philosophy was then flourishing. And because he singularly loved his master Socrates, he made him the principal speaker in virtually all his dialogues. In this way, he combined his own learning, whether acquired from others or discovered for himself by using his own intelligence as far as he could, with his master's grace and concern with moral discourse.

The pursuit of wisdom, then, consists in both action and contemplation; and so it may be said that one part of it is active and the other contemplative. The active part of philosophy has to do with the conduct of life, that is, with the regulation of morals; and the contemplative with the investigation of natural causes and the purest form of truth. Socrates is remembered as having excelled in

the active branch, whereas Pythagoras directed the force of his intellect as far as possible to the contemplative side. Plato is congratulated on having brought philosophy to perfection by uniting the two parts, which he then divided into three departments: the first moral, which is chiefly concerned with action; the second natural, which is devoted to contemplation; and the third logical, which distinguishes the true from the false. This last is necessary to both the active and contemplative branches; but it is nonetheless contemplation which especially claims investigation of the truth as its province. This threefold division is therefore not opposed to that distinction according to which the pursuit of all wisdom is understood to consist in action and contemplation.

But it would, I consider, be tedious to expound what Plato believed in respect of each of these parts – that is, what he knew or believed as to the end of all actions, the causes of all natural things, and the light of all intelligences; nor do I consider that we should make piecemeal assertions on the subject. In any case, Plato admired and emulated the very well known practice of his master Socrates, whom he portrays in his books as participating in the debate, of concealing his own knowledge or opinions. For this reason, then, it is not possible easily to discover what Plato's own views on important subjects were.

It is, however, proper for us to mention and include in this work certain of the opinions which are to be read in his works. The opinions in question are either stated by him or reported and written down by him as stated by others and, as it seems, endorsed by him. These opinions are either favourable to the true religion which our faith receives and defends, or seem to be contrary to it, as in the question of whether there is one god or many and the bearing which this has upon the truly blessed life which is to come after death. But those who are congratulated on having followed Plato most closely – who greatly prefer Plato to the other philosophers of the nations, and who are more highly esteemed for their acuteness and understanding of the truth – do, it seems, have an understanding of God such that they find in Him the cause of existence, the ground of understanding, and the pattern according to which we are to live. Of these three things, the first is understood to pertain to the natural, the second to the rational, and the third to the moral department of philosophy. For man has been created in such a way that, through that which is most excellent in him, he may attain to

that which excels all else: that is, the one true and perfect God, without Whom nothing in nature exists, no doctrine instructs, and no act profits. Let Him be sought, therefore, in Whom all things are ordered for us; let Him be discerned, in Whom all things are certain for us; let Him be loved, in Whom all things are right for us.

5 That it is with the Platonists above all that we should discuss theology, for their opinions are preferable to the dogmas of all other philosophers

If, therefore, Plato has said that the wise man is an imitator, knower and lover of this God, and is blessed by participation in Him, what need is there to scrutinise other philosophers? No one has come closer to us than the Platonists.² Let that mythical theology which enchants the minds of the ungodly with the crimes of the gods therefore give place to them; so too the civil theology, in which impure demons, under the name of gods, have seduced the peoples with earthly joys, and have wished to possess the errors of men as divine honours. (They excite in their worshippers the most unclean desires; thereby, they encourage them to make the crimes of the gods into theatrical displays at the exhibition of which the gods themselves love to be spectators. In this civil theology, whatever may have been honourably performed in the temple is rendered base by its association with the obscenities of the theatre; but whatever gross acts are performed in the theatres are to be praised in comparison with the disgusting rites of the temples.) So too the explanations of Varro, in which he accounts for these rites in terms of heaven and earth and the seeds and actions of mortal things. For, first, those rites do not signify what he attempts to suggest that they do, and so truth does not follow his endeavour. Second, even if they did, the rational soul ought not to worship as its god those things which are placed below it in the order of nature, nor ought it to exalt as gods those things above which the true God has exalted it. So too those writings, which certainly pertained to the sacred rites, which Numa Pompilius took care to conceal by having them

² Cf. Augustine, *De vera relig.*, 7; Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, 21; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.*, 1,21.

buried with him, and which, when they were subsequently unearthed by the plough, the Senate ordered to be burned.

We may, however, regard Numa with somewhat less disdain when we remember that to this same class of writings belong the letters which Alexander of Macedon wrote to his mother.³ In them, he relates what had been revealed to him by the Egyptian high priest Leo. Here, not only are Picus, Faunus, Aeneas, Romulus, Hercules, Aesculapius, Liber, born of Semele, the twin sons of Tyndarus, and other deified mortals, seen to have been men. This is also shown to be true of the higher race of Gods to whom Cicero seems to refer, although without mentioning their names, in his *Tusculanae disputationes*:⁴ Jupiter, Juno, Saturn, Vulcan, Vesta, and many others, whom Varro attempts to assimilate to parts or elements of the world. Fearful, just as Numa was, because he had revealed a mystery, Leo adjured and admonished Alexander that, when he had communicated these things in writing to his mother, he was to command that the letter should be burnt.

Let what is contained in these two theologies, then, the mythical and the civil, give place to the philosophy of the Platonists, who have said that the true God is the author of all things, the illuminator of truth, and the giver of happiness. So too with the other philosophers who, with minds enslaved to the body, have formed the opinion that corporeal things are the first principles of nature: let them also give place to such great men, who acknowledge so great a God. Examples of such philosophers are Thales with his moisture, Anaximenes with his air, the Stoics with fire, Epicurus with atoms – that is, extremely small bodies which can be neither divided nor perceived – and many others, whom we need not pause to enumerate, but who have declared that bodies, whether simple or compound, lacking life or living, but bodies nonetheless, are the causes and first principles of things. For some of them – the Epicureans, for example – have believed that it is possible for living things to be made from things which do not have life. Others again have believed that all things, whether living or without life, spring from what is living, but that all things are bodies and come from bodies. The Stoics, for example, have held that fire – that is, one

³ Plutarch, *Alex*, 27.

⁴ *Tusc. disp.*, 1, 13, 29.

of the four material elements of which this visible world is composed – is both alive and sapient, and is the maker of the world and of all that therein is, and that such fire is wholly God.

These, and other philosophers of the same kind, have been able to conceive only of what their hearts, bound to the bodily senses, have devised for them. This is so even though they had within themselves something which they did not see, and even though they represented to themselves inwardly what they had seen externally even when they were not seeing it, but only thinking of it. For what appears during such thought is no longer a body, but the likeness of a body; and that faculty by which this likeness of a body is seen in the mind is itself neither a body nor the likeness of a body. Again, the faculty which judges whether the likeness is beautiful or ugly is beyond doubt superior to that which is judged. That faculty is the mind of man and the rational soul; and it certainly is not a body, if even the likeness of a body, when perceived and judged in the mind of the thinker, is not a body. The soul, therefore, is neither earth, nor water, nor air, nor fire, of which four corporeal substances – called the four elements – we see that the corporeal world is composed. And if our soul is not a body, how can God, the creator of the soul, be a body?

As we have said, therefore, let all these philosophers give place to the Platonists. Let those also give place who, though ashamed to say that God is a body, have nonetheless held that our souls are of the same nature as God. These latter are not disturbed by the great mutability which the soul exhibits, but which it is blasphemous to attribute to the nature of God. Rather, they say that it is the body which changes the nature of the soul, but that the soul itself remains immutable. They might as well say that it is some object which wounds the flesh, but that the flesh itself remains invulnerable. In short, that which cannot be changed cannot be changed by anything, and, to the extent that something can be changed by a body, it can be changed by something, and therefore cannot rightly be called immutable.

6 Of the understanding of the Platonists in that department of philosophy which is called physical

The Platonist philosophers, therefore, who, as we see, are not undeservedly raised above the rest in fame and glory, saw that God is

not a body, and therefore passed beyond all bodies in their search for God. They saw that whatever is mutable is not the supreme God, and they therefore passed beyond every soul and all mutable spirits in searching for the Most High. Next, they saw that, in every changeable thing whatsoever, whatever its mode, or whatever the manner of its nature, the form that makes it what it is can have no existence except from Him Who truly *is* because He is immutable. So it is, then, that, whether we consider the whole body of the world, with its shapes, qualities and ordered movements, and the elements arrayed from heaven to earth with whatever bodies exist in them; or all life – either that which nourishes and conserves, as in the case of the trees; or that which, in addition to this, also has sensation, as with the beasts; or that which has all these things and intelligence besides, as in the case of men; or that which conserves itself, and perceives and understands, without needing to be sustained by food, as with the angels: none of these can have existence other than through Him Who simply *is*. For, to Him, it is not one thing to exist and another to live, as if he could exist without living; nor, to Him, is it one thing to live and another to understand, as though he might live but not understand; nor is it one thing to understand and another to be blessed, as though He might understand and not be blessed. Rather, to Him, to exist is to live, to understand and to be blessed.

By reason of this immutability and simplicity, the Platonists have understood that He has made all things, and that He Himself could have been made from none of them. For they have noted that whatever exists is either body or life; that life is something better than body; and that the form of a body is sensible, whereas its life is intelligible. They have, therefore, preferred the intelligible form to the sensible. By sensible things, we mean those things which can be perceived by the body's sight and touch; and, by intelligible, those which can be understood by the vision of the mind. For there is no corporeal beauty, whether in the condition of a body (shape, for example) or in movement (music, for instance), that is not judged by the mind. But this certainly could not be done unless a higher form of these kinds of things existed in the mind, with no bulk of mass, with no sound of voice, without location in either place or time. If the mind were not mutable even in respect of these things, however, it would not be possible for one man's judgment of sensible forms to be better than another's. The judgment of the cleverer will be better than that of the

slow-witted; that of the skilled than that of the unskilled; that of the more experienced than that of the less experienced; and, as the same person grows more proficient, so does his judgment become better than it was formerly. But that which is capable of being better or worse is beyond doubt mutable.

Hence, able and learned men, well versed in these things, easily came to the conclusion that the Primary Form does not exist in those things which are mutable. Since, therefore, they saw that body and mind may have form to a greater or lesser extent, and that, if they lacked form entirely, they would not exist at all, they saw that there must be some being which is the Primary Form, unchangeable and therefore not subject to degrees of comparison; and they most rightly believed that here was the First Principle of things, which was not itself made and by which all things were made. Thus, God Himself revealed to them what may be known of Him, when His invisible things, and also His eternal power and Godhead, by which all visible and temporal things were made, were seen and understood by them through created things.⁵ But we have now said enough of that department of philosophy which the Platonists call physical, that is, natural.

7 How much more excellent the Platonists are than all others in logic, that is, in rational philosophy

As to their teaching where it concerns the second department, which is called logic, that is, rational philosophy: God forbid that we should seem to compare the Platonists with those who located the faculty of discerning the truth in the bodily senses, and who supposed that all that we learn is to be measured by such untrustworthy and deceptive standards! Such were the Epicureans and all others like them, and, again, the Stoics themselves, who, though they passionately loved that skill in debate which they called dialectic, held that the mind derives from the body's senses those ideas (which they call *ennoiai*) which they explain by means of definition. Indeed, the whole of what they learn and teach is derived from this belief, and connected to it. But, here, when the Stoics say that only the wise are beautiful, I often wonder with what bodily senses they

⁵ Cf. Rom. 1, 19f.

have seen that beauty. With what eyes of the flesh they have seen the form and comeliness of wisdom?

Those, however, whom we rightly place before all others have distinguished those things which are conceived by the mind from those which impinge upon the senses, neither taking away from the senses that which they can do, nor giving to them more than they can do. And the light of our minds, by which we learn all things, they have said to be that selfsame God by Whom all things were made.

8 That the Platonists hold the chief place in moral philosophy also

The remaining department of philosophy is morals, which the Greeks call ethics. Here, what is sought is the highest good, which, if we refer all that we do to it, and if we seek it, not for the sake of something else, but simply for its own sake, will leave us nothing further to seek in order to be happy. It is for this reason that it is called the end, because we desire other things for the sake of it, but itself only for its own sake.

Some have said that this good which makes man happy comes from the body, and others from the mind, and others again from both. For they saw that man himself consists of mind and body; and so they believed that they could derive their well-being from either of these two things, or from both of them together, and so arrive at a kind of final good through which they might be happy: a final good to which they might refer all their actions without having to seek anything else to which that good itself might in turn be referred. Hence, those who are said to have added a third class of goods, which are called extrinsic, such as honour, glory, money and things of this kind, did not regard them as part of the final good – that is, as things to be sought for their own sake – but as things to be sought for the sake of something else. And this class of goods is good for good men, they say, but bad for bad men. Thus, whether the philosophers have sought to derive the good of man from the mind, from the body, or from both together, it is still only from man that they have supposed that it is to be sought. But those who have sought it from the body have sought it from the baser part of man; those who have sought it from the mind, from the better part; and those who have sought it from both, from the

whole man. Whether, therefore, they have sought it from any part or from the whole, they have still sought it only from man. Nor have these differences, though three in number, produced only three dissenting sects of philosophers, but many; for the different schools have developed many different opinions as to the good of the body and the good of the mind and the good of both together.

Let them, therefore, all give place to the Platonists: to those who have asserted that a man is happy not in the enjoyment of the body or in the enjoyment of the mind, but in the enjoyment of God, enjoying Him not as the mind does the body or itself, or as one friend enjoys another friend, but as the eye enjoys light – if, indeed, there is an analogy to be drawn between these things and God: this is a question which, with God's help, I shall to the best of my ability make clear in another place. For the time being, it is enough to remember that Plato asserted that the highest good is to live according to virtue;⁶ that only he can do this who has knowledge of God and imitates Him; and that this is the only cause of happiness. Therefore, he did not doubt that to practise philosophy is to love God, whose nature is incorporeal. Hence, it certainly follows that he who studies wisdom – that is, the philosopher – will be happy when he begins to enjoy God. For though it is not necessarily true that one who enjoys what he loves is happy – for many are miserable because they love that which ought not to be loved, and more miserable still when they enjoy it – yet no one is happy who does not enjoy what he loves. For even those who love what ought not to be loved do not count themselves as happy by loving it, but by enjoying it. Who but the most miserable of men, therefore, will deny that the man who enjoys what he loves is happy when what he loves is the true and highest good? But Plato says that the true and highest good is God, and he therefore wishes the philosopher to be a lover of God; for philosophy aims at the happy life, and he who loves God is happy in the enjoyment of God.

9 Of that philosophy which has come nearest to the truth of the Christian faith

Certain philosophers, then, have held, concerning the true God, that He is the author of all created things, the light by which things

⁶ Cf. *Gorgias*, 470b; 508b.

are known, and the good for the sake of which things are done; and that we therefore derive from Him the first principle of our nature, the truth of doctrine, and the happiness of life. Whether these philosophers are more properly called Platonists, or whether they attach some other name to their school; whether it was only the leaders of the Ionian school – that same Plato, for example, and those who fully understood him – who held these opinions; or whether the Italian school did so also, on account of Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans, and any others from the same region who may have held the same views; or whether certain persons of other nations who were held to be wise men or philosophers are found to have seen and taught this, be they Atlantic Libyans, Egyptians, Indians, Persians, Chaldeans, Scythians, Gauls or Spaniards: we place these above all others, and confess that they approach closest to us.

10 That the excellence of the Christian religion surpasses all the arts of the philosophers

A Christian man instructed only in the literature of the Church may be ignorant of the name 'Platonists', and may not know that there have been two schools of philosophers, the Ionian and Italian, speaking the Greek language. He will not, indeed, be so heedless of human affairs as not to know that philosophers profess either the study of wisdom, or wisdom itself. He will, however, be wary of those who practise philosophy 'according to the elements of the world' and not according to God, by Whom the world itself was made. For he is admonished by the precept of the apostle, and faithfully hears what the apostle has said: 'Beware that no one deceive you through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the elements of the world.'⁷ Then again, however, lest he suppose that all philosophers are of this kind, the Christian man hears the same apostle saying of some of them: 'That which may be known of God is manifest among them, for God has manifested it to them. For His invisible things from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, also His eternal power and Godhead.'⁸ Also, speaking to the Athenians, having said

⁷ Coloss. 2,8.

⁸ Rom. 1,19f.

a great thing concerning God, which few can understand, 'in Him we live, and move, and have our being', the apostle adds: 'As certain also of your own have said'.⁹ Moreover, the Christian well knows that even these philosophers are to be shunned when they err. For when the apostle says that God has manifested His invisible things to them by those things which are made, so that they may be seen by the understanding, he also says in the same place that they did not rightly worship God Himself, because they paid the divine honours which are due to Him alone to other things also, to which they should not have paid them. 'Because, knowing God, they glorified Him not as God; neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of corruptible man, and of birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.'¹⁰ The apostle here intends us to understand the Romans and the Greeks and the Egyptians, who rejoiced in the name of wisdom; but we shall dispute this matter with them later. To the extent that the Platonists agree with us, however, that there is one God, the Author of this universe, Who is not only above every bodily thing, being incorporeal, but also, being incorruptible, above all souls, and is our first principle, our light and our good: in this respect, we place them above all others. And even if the Christian who is ignorant of their writings does not use in disputation words which he has not learned – even if he does not call that department of philosophy which treats of the investigation of nature 'natural' (which is the Latin term) or 'physical' (which is the Greek one); or that which seeks to discover how the truth may be perceived 'rational' or 'logical'; or that which concerns morals, and shows how good ends are to be sought and evil avoided, 'moral' or 'ethical' – he nonetheless knows that it is from the one true and supremely good God that we receive the nature with which we are made in His image, and the doctrine by which we know Him and ourselves, and the grace through which, cleaving to Him, we are blessed.

This, therefore, is the reason why we prefer the Platonists to all others: because, while other philosophers have exhausted their

⁹ Acts 17,28. St Paul's reference here is to Cleanthes's *Hymn to Zeus* and Aratus's *Phaenomena*.

¹⁰ Rom. 1,21f.

ingenuity and zeal in seeking the causes of things and the right way to learn and to live, these, by knowing God, have discovered where to find the cause by which the universe was established, and the light by which truth is to be perceived, and the fount at which we may drink of happiness. Those philosophers, then, be they Platonists or any other philosophers of any nation, who have thought in this way concerning God, are in agreement with us. We have, however, preferred to plead our cause with the Platonists because their writings are better known. The Greeks, whose language is pre-eminent among the nations, have celebrated their writings with great acclaim; and Latin speakers, moved by their excellence or glory, have been all the more eager to study them, and have made them all the more distinguished and famous by translating them into our language.

11 Where Plato was able to acquire the understanding by which he came so close to Christian knowledge

Certain of our brethren in Christ's grace are amazed when they hear or read that Plato had an understanding of God which, as they see, is in many respects consistent with the truth of our religion. For this reason, not a few have supposed that, when he went to Egypt, he heard the prophet Jeremiah, or, during the same journey, read the writings of the prophets.¹¹ This is an opinion which I myself have expressed in certain of my books.¹² But a careful calculation of the dates contained in chronological history indicates that Plato was born some one hundred years after the time when Jeremiah prophesied. Also, Plato lived to be eighty-one; and we find that there are some sixty years between the date of his death and the time when Ptolemy, the king of Egypt, sent for the prophetic Scriptures of the Hebrew people from Judea and entrusted them to seventy Hebrew men who also knew the Greek language, to be translated and kept.¹³ On that journey of his, therefore, Plato could neither have seen

¹¹ Cf. Justin Martyr, *Apol.*, 1,60; Origen, *Contra Cels.*, 4,39; Eusebius, *Praep. evang.*, 11,9,2; Cyril of Alexandria, *Contra Jul.*, 29; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.*, 1,22.

¹² Cf. *De doct. Christ.*, 2,43; *Retract.*, 2,4.

¹³ Cf. Bk xv, 13.

Jeremiah, who had died so long before, nor read those same Scriptures, which had not yet been translated into the Greek language in which he was fluent.

He might, of course, because he was a diligent student, have studied them with the aid of an interpreter, as he did the writings of the Egyptians: not, indeed, writing a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (for even Ptolemy himself, who could indeed inspire fear by his royal power, obtained this privilege only by the granting of a great favour) but in order to learn as much as he could by discussing their content. Certain indications seem to support this supposition. For instance, the Book of Genesis begins thus: 'In the beginning, God made the heaven and the earth. And the earth was invisible and without order, and there was darkness over the abyss; and the spirit of God moved over the waters.'¹⁴ Now in the *Timaeus*, the book which he wrote on the formation of the world, Plato says that, in His work of creation, God first united earth and fire;¹⁵ and it is clear that Plato assigns fire to the region of heaven. This sentence therefore bears a certain resemblance to the statement, 'In the beginning, God made the heaven and the earth.' Again, Plato speaks of the two intermediate elements, water and air, which unite the two extremes of earth and fire;¹⁶ and, here, he is thought by some to have had in mind the words: 'The spirit of God moved over the waters.' For, not being sufficiently aware of how the Scriptures usually designate the Spirit of God – of the fact that the word 'air' also means 'spirit' – he may have supposed that the four elements are mentioned in this passage. Next, as to the fact that Plato called the philosopher a lover of God: nothing in the sacred writings is expressed more ardently than this. But above all – and this more than anything else almost inclines me to agree that Plato was not without knowledge of those books – there is the fact that, when the words of God were brought to the holy Moses by an angel, and Moses asked the name of Him Who charged him to go and deliver the Hebrew people out of Egypt, the answer was: 'I am who am; and thou shalt say to the children of Israel, He Who is sent me unto you.'¹⁷ This is as if to say that, in comparison with Him Who

¹⁴ Gen. 1,1f.

¹⁵ *Tim.*, 31B.

¹⁶ *Tim.*, 32B.

¹⁷ Exod. 3,14.

truly is, because He is immutable, things which are created mutable have no being. This is a view which Plato vehemently held and most diligently commended;¹⁸ and, as far as I know, this statement is found nowhere in the books of those who came before Plato, other than where it is said, 'I am who am; and thou shalt say to the children of Israel, He Who is sent me unto you.'

12 That even the Platonists, though they did well in believing that there is one true God, nonetheless held that sacred rites are to be performed for many gods

But it does not matter from what source Plato learned these things – whether from the books of the ancient writers who preceded him or, rather, as the apostle says, 'Because that which may be known of God has been manifested among them, for God hath manifested it to them. For His invisible things from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by those things which have been made, also His eternal power and Godhead.' At all events, I have, I think, sufficiently shown that it was not without good reason that I chose the Platonist philosophers to discuss with them the question of natural theology which we have here taken up: that is, whether, for the sake of the happiness which is to come after death, sacred rites are to be performed for one God or for many.

I have, indeed, chosen them especially because they surpass all others in their glory and distinction, just as they do in their doctrine that there is one God Who made heaven and earth. They have been placed far above the others by the judgment of posterity. Aristotle, a pupil of Plato, a man of outstanding intellect and, though certainly inferior to Plato in eloquence, easily the superior of many others, founded the Peripatetic school (so called because it was his habit to walk up and down as he lectured); and, because of the greatness of his fame, he gathered a great number of pupils into his school even while his own teacher was still living. Again, when Plato died, he was succeeded by his sister's son Speusippus, and by his beloved pupil Xenocrates, in his school, which was called the Academy; and, for this reason, they and their successors were called Academics.

¹⁸ Cf. e.g. *Rep.*, 2, 380dff.

But the most distinguished philosophers of more recent times who have been pleased to follow Plato have nonetheless refused to call themselves either Peripatetics or Academics, but prefer to be called Platonists. The Greeks Plotinus, Iamblichus and Porphyry are the most eminent among these; but the African Apuleius, who was learned in both languages – that is, the Greek and Latin – also won renown as a Platonist. All these, however, and the others who were of the same school, and, indeed, Plato himself, held that sacred rites should be performed in honour of many gods.¹⁹

13 Of the opinion of Plato, according to which he defined as gods only such beings as are good and lovers of virtue

Therefore, though they also differ from us in many other respects, the matter which I have just mentioned, and which is the question now before us, is, in itself, one of considerable importance. I shall, then, first ask the Platonists for which gods they think that sacred rites ought to be performed: for the good or for the bad, or for good and bad alike? Now we have the opinion of Plato himself, who says that all gods are good, and that there simply are no bad gods.²⁰ It follows, then, that we are to understand that such rites are to be performed for the good; for then they will be performed for gods, whereas, if they are not good, they will not be gods.

If this is so – and what else should we believe of the gods? – it immediately renders vacuous the opinion of the many persons who believe that evil gods are to be placated by sacrifices, lest they harm us, and that the good are to be invoked so that they may aid us. For there are no evil gods; and so, the Platonists say, it is to the good that the due honour of such rites is to be paid.

Who, then, are the gods who love theatrical displays: who demand that these should be included among things divine, and that they should be performed in their honour? Their power indicates that they are not mere nonentities; but their fondness for such things shows beyond doubt that they are evil. What Plato believed

¹⁹ *Leges*, 4,716Dff; 8,828Aff.

²⁰ *Rep.*, 2,379A.

concerning theatrical performances is well known; for he considers that the poets themselves should be banished from the city because they have composed poems so unworthy of the majesty and goodness of the gods.²¹ Who, then, are those gods who are at odds with Plato himself concerning theatrical performances? He, indeed, will not allow the gods to be defamed by fictitious crimes; they, however, command that those very crimes are to be celebrated in their honour.

Moreover, on the occasion when they indicated that the games were to be repeated they not only demanded shameful things, but did cruel ones; for they carried off the son of Titus Latinus, and, because Titus Latinus had refused to obey their authority, they sent a disease upon him which they removed only when he had complied with their commands.²² Wicked as these gods are, however, Plato does not think that we should fear them. Rather, he maintains his own opinion with firmness and the greatest constancy, and does not hesitate to exclude from a well-founded community all the sacrilegious follies of the poets in which the gods who are united in their love of impurity take delight. But, as I have already mentioned in the second book, this Plato is placed by Labeo among the demi-gods.²³ And Labeo thinks that evil deities are to be propitiated with the blood of sacrificial victims and by rites of that kind, and the good deities by plays and other such things which pertain to joyousness. How is it, then, that the demi-god Plato so unflinchingly ventures to deprive not the demi-gods, but the gods – and, what is more, good ones – of such delights because he deems them base? Moreover, the gods themselves certainly confound the opinion of Labeo; for, in the case of Latinus, they showed themselves to be not merely lascivious and pleasure-loving, but cruel and terrible also.

Let the Platonists therefore explain these things to us; for, according to the opinion of their founder, they think that all gods are good and honest and friends of the virtues of the wise, and they deem it impious to hold any other opinion of any of the gods. We will explain it, they say. Let us, then, listen respectfully.

²¹ *Rep.*, 3,398A; 8,568B; 10,605A; 607B.

²² Cf. Bk IV,26.

²³ Bk II,11

14 Of the opinion of those who have said that rational souls are of three kinds: that is, those of the gods in heaven, those of the demons of the air, and those of men on earth

There is, say the Platonists, a threefold division of all animate beings in whom there exists a rational soul: namely, gods, men, and demons. The gods occupy the most exalted region, men the lowest, and the demons an intermediate one. For the seat of the gods is in heaven, that of men on earth, and that of demons in the air. And as the dignity of their location differs, so does that of their natures. The gods, therefore, are superior to men and demons; but men have been placed below the gods and demons with respect to both the order of their elements and the difference of their merit. The demons, therefore, who are midway between the two, are to be deemed inferior to the gods, because they inhabit a lower region; but they are to be deemed superior to men, because their dwelling is higher. For they have immortality of body in common with the gods; but they have the passions of the mind in common with men. It is no wonder, then, say the Platonists, that they also take delight in the obscenities of stage plays and the fictions of the poets; for they are subject to human emotions, from which the gods are far removed and to which they are entirely strangers. From this we gather that Plato, in detesting poetry and prohibiting works of fiction, deprived not the gods, who are entirely good and exalted, but the demons, of their pleasure in theatrical displays.

Although these things are also found in the writings of others, the Platonist Apuleius of Madaura wrote a book devoted solely to this subject, and chose to call it *De deo Socratis*. In it, he discusses and explains what kind of divine being it was that was attached and bound to Socrates by a kind of friendship, and by which, it is said, he was warned to refrain from acting when what he proposed to do would not have had a favourable outcome.²⁴ Apuleius declares clearly, and most fully asserts, that this was not a god, but a demon, and he discusses with great lucidity the opinion of Plato as to the sublimity of the gods, the lowly station of men, and the intermediate position of the demons. Since these things are so, then, how did

²⁴ Cf. Plato, *Apol.*, 31D.

Plato dare to take away the pleasures of the theatre – not from the gods, certainly, for he exempted these from human impurity, but at any rate from the demons – unless, by so doing, he meant to admonish the mind of man, even while still confined within these dying members, to hold in contempt the commands of the impure demons and, for the sake of the splendour of virtue, to detest their uncleanness? For if it was most honourable for Plato to oppose and prohibit these things, then surely it was most base of the demons to require and command them. So either Apuleius errs, and it is not to this class of divine being that Socrates's familiar spirit belongs; or Plato's beliefs are inconsistent with one another, in that he honours the demons yet removes from the well-ordered city the things in which they take pleasure; or else Socrates is not to be congratulated on his friendship with a demon. After all, Apuleius was so embarrassed by this friendship that he called his book *Concerning the God of Socrates*, even though, according to the discussion in which he distinguishes between gods and demons so carefully and at such great length, he should have called it not *Concerning the God*, but *Concerning the Demon of Socrates*. He preferred to put the word 'demon' into the discussion itself, rather than into the title of the book, for, thanks to the wholesome doctrine which has enlightened human affairs, all, or nearly all, men now shrink from the name of demons. So much is this so that if anyone at all, before reading the treatise itself, had read *Concerning the Demon of Socrates* as the title of a book in which Apuleius upholds the dignity of demons, such a reader would certainly have supposed that this Socrates was no very reputable man.

But what did even Apuleius himself find to praise in the demons, apart from their subtlety and strength of body and the higher region that they inhabit? For, concerning their morals, when he spoke of all of them in general, not only had he nothing good to say, but, on the contrary, a great deal that was bad. Indeed, no one, when he has read that book, will wonder at it that the demons desired to have even the baseness of theatrical performances included among things divine. Again, no one will wonder at it that, wishing to be thought gods, they should have found delight in the crimes of the gods. And no one will wonder at it that whatever in their sacred rites provokes either laughter or horror by its obscene solemnity or disgusting cruelty should be agreeable to their passions.

15 That neither their aerial bodies not their higher dwelling-places bestow upon the demons a superiority over men

Far be it, then, for the mind of the truly religious man, who is a servant of the true God, to suppose that demons are better than himself because they have better bodies. Otherwise, he will have to place above himself many beasts which surpass us in the acuteness of their senses, in the ease and rapidity of their movement, in their strength, and in the greatly prolonged vigour of their bodies. What man can equal the power of vision of the eagle and the vulture? Who can equal the dog in his sense of smell? Who can equal in speed the hare, the stag and all the birds? Who can equal the strength of the lion or the elephant? Who can equal in length of life the serpent, which is said to shed old age with its skin and return again to youth? But just as we are better than all these things in our capacity to reason and understand, so ought we to show that we are better than the demons by living well and honestly. Divine providence has indeed given to these demons certain superior bodily gifts, even though we are clearly their moral superiors. But this has been done in order that the things in which we excel them may thereby be commended to us as far more worthy to be desired than the body. It has also been done so that we may learn to despise the bodily excellence which we know that the demons have, in comparison with the goodness of life in respect of which we surpass them. For we know that we, too, are to have immortality of body: not, however, an immortality tortured eternally with punishment, but one to which our purity of soul now leads us.

But now, as to their loftiness of situation: it is entirely ridiculous to be so much struck by the fact that the demons dwell in the air and we on the earth as to suppose that they are for this reason to be regarded as our superiors. For, by this reasoning, we place all the birds above ourselves. But, our adversaries say, when they are fatigued with flying or need to restore their bodies with food, the birds return to the earth to rest or to feed, whereas the demons do not. Does it suit them to say, then, that, as the birds are superior to us, so are the demons superior to the birds? And if this opinion is completely ridiculous, there is no reason why we should think that the demons are worthy to receive our religious submission

merely because they inhabit a loftier element. For just as the birds are, in fact, not only not superior to us who dwell on the earth, but are indeed placed beneath us by reason of the dignity of the rational soul which is in us, so it is also with the demons: even though they dwell in the air, and the air is higher than the earth, they are not on that account better than we who dwell on the earth. On the contrary, men are to be placed above the demons, because the despair of the demons is not to be compared with the hope of the godly.

Indeed, even that principle of Plato's²⁵ according to which he connects and orders the four elements by inserting between the two extreme elements – fire, which is the most unstable, and earth, which is the most stable – the two intermediate ones, air and water, in such a way that water is above earth in the same proportion as air is above water and fire above air: even this principle sufficiently admonishes us not to estimate the merits of living creatures according to the classes of the elements. For Apuleius himself says that man is a terrestrial animal like all the rest, who is, however, to be placed far above the aquatic animals, even though Plato places water itself above earth.²⁶ By this, we are to understand that, even though Plato's classification of bodies seems to be the correct one, the same order is not to be observed when assigning merits to souls; for it may well be that a superior soul will inhabit an inferior body and an inferior soul a superior body.

16 What the Platonist Apuleius believed as to the morals and activities of the demons

When this same Platonist spoke of the morals of the demons, then, he said that they are agitated by the same perturbations of mind as men: vexed by injuries; placated by obsequies and gifts; gratified by honours; delighted by the diversity of sacred rites; and provoked if any such rite is neglected.²⁷ Among other things, he also says that the divinations of augurs, soothsayers, prophecies and dreams are due to them, and that the miracles of sorcerers are a function of

²⁵ *Tim.*, 32B; cf. Ch. 11.

²⁶ *De deo Socr.*, 3.

²⁷ *De deo Socr.*, 12; 14.

theirs.²⁸ But, when he briefly defines them, he says that 'the demons are animal in genus, passive in soul, rational in mind, aerial in body, and eternal in time; of which five things, the first three are common to them and us, the fourth peculiar to themselves, and the fifth they have in common with the gods'.²⁹ I see, however, that of the first three things, which they have in common with us, they also have two in common with the gods. For Apuleius says that the gods also are animal; and when he was assigning its own element to each kind of being, he placed us among the terrestrial animals, along with everything that has life and sensation on the earth; he placed the fish and other swimming creatures among the aquatic animals; he placed the demons among the animals of the air; and he placed the gods among the animals of the aether.³⁰ Thus, if the demons are animal in genus, they have this in common not only with men, but also with the gods and the beasts; if they are rational in mind, they have this in common with the gods and with men; if they are eternal in time, they have this in common with the gods only; if they are passive in soul, they have this in common with men only; if they are aerial in body, in this they are alone.

It is, therefore, no great thing that they are animal in genus, for so are the beasts; they are not above us in being rational in mind, for so are we also; and what good does it do them to be eternal in time if they are not blessed? Temporary felicity is better than eternal misery. And how are they superior to us in being passive in soul? — for so are we also, but we would not have been so had we not been miserable. As to their being aerial in body, what is that worth, when a soul of any kind whatsoever is to be preferred to any kind of body? And therefore religious worship, which is owed by the soul, is certainly not owed to something which is inferior to the soul. Moreover, if Apuleius had enumerated virtue, wisdom and felicity among the things which he attributed to the demons, and had said that they possess these things in common with the gods and eternally, he certainly then would have been attributing to them something greatly to be desired and worthy of high esteem. But even then it would not have behoved us to worship the demons on account of these things, as though they were God, but, rather, to

²⁸ *De deo Socr.*, 6.

²⁹ *De deo Socr.*, 13.

³⁰ *De deo Socr.*, 7f.

worship God Himself, from Whom we should know that they had received them. But how much less worthy are these aerial animals of divine honour, who are rational only so that they may be miserable, who are passive only so that they may suffer, and who are eternal only so that their misery may have no end!

17 Whether it is proper for man to worship those spirits from whose vices he ought to be set free

Leaving other considerations aside, then, we here deal only with Apuleius's statement that the demons have in common with us a soul subject to the passions. If all four elements are full of living beings of their own – fire and air of immortal, and water and earth of mortal ones – why, I ask, are the souls of the demons agitated by the whirlwinds and tempests of passion? For the Greek word *pathos* means 'disturbance'; and this is what Apuleius means when he says that the demons are 'passive in soul', because the word *passio*, which is the same as *pathos*, signifies a commotion of the mind contrary to reason.³¹ Why, then, do these disturbances exist in the minds of demons when they are not found in the beasts? For if anything of a similar kind appears in the beasts, it is not a 'disturbance', because it is not contrary to reason, which the beasts lack. Again, when these disturbances occur in men, this is brought about by foolishness or misery; for we are not yet blessed by that perfection of wisdom which is promised to us at the end, when we shall be redeemed from this mortality. But the gods, they say, do not undergo these disturbances because they are not only eternal, but also blessed. This is because they too are believed to have rational souls, but souls which are wholly pure from all stain and pestilence. If, then, the gods do not suffer disturbance because they are animals who are happy and not miserable, and if the beasts do not suffer disturbance because they are animals who have no capacity for either happiness or misery, it remains that the demons, like men, suffer disturbance because they are animals who are not blessed but miserable.

What foolishness it is, then, or, rather, madness, to submit ourselves to demons, in the name of some religion, when by the true

³¹ Cf. Cicero, *Tusc. disp.*, 4,6,11.

religion we are set free from those vices in respect of which we resemble them! For Apuleius himself, though he is in many ways lenient towards the demons and considers them worthy of divine honours, is nonetheless compelled to confess that they are goaded to anger,³² whereas we are taught by the true religion not to be moved to anger, but, rather, to resist it. The demons are beguiled by gifts; but the true religion teaches us not to show favour to anyone on account of gifts received. The demons are mollified by honours; but the true religion teaches us on no account to be swayed by such things. The demons are haters of some men and lovers of others not because they have judged them in prudence and tranquillity, but because of what Apuleius calls their passivity of soul; whereas the true religion teaches us to love our enemies also. Finally, the true religion commands us to lay aside all disquietude of heart and restlessness of mind, and all the tumults and tempests of soul with which, as Apuleius asserts, the demons seethe and boil.³³ What reason is there, then, apart from folly and miserable error, for you to humble yourself to worship a being whom you do not wish to resemble in your life? And why should you pay religious homage to one whom you do not wish to imitate, when the highest duty of religion is to imitate him whom you worship?

**18 What manner of religion it is which teaches that
men should make use of demons as advocates who
commend them to good gods**

It is vain, therefore, for Apuleius and those who think as he does to honour the demons by establishing them in the air, between the aetherial heavens and the earth, so that – since, as Plato is said to have believed, no god has dealings with men³⁴ – they may carry to the gods the petitions of men and bring back to men the answers to their prayers. Those who believe such things have thought it unworthy that men should have dealings with the gods or the gods with men, but proper for demons to have dealings with both gods and men, presenting the petitions of men on the one hand, and, on

³² *De deo Socr.*, 13.

³³ *De deo Socr.*, 12.

³⁴ *Symp.*, 203A; cf. Apuleius, *De deo Socr.*, 4; 6.

the other, bringing back what the gods have granted. Thus, a man of probity and a stranger to the wicked arts of magic is to avail himself of demons who love those arts, as patrons through whom the gods may grant him a hearing, even though, by not loving such arts, he would be more deserving of a hearing which would be all the more readily and happily granted! The demons indeed love those wicked theatrical displays which the chaste do not love. They love, in the sorceries of the magicians, 'a thousand arts of doing harm',³⁵ which the innocent do not love. Modesty and innocence, then, if they wish to obtain anything from the gods, will not be able to do so by their own merits unless their enemies act as their intermediaries! It is vain for men to endeavour to justify these poetic inventions and theatrical absurdities. If human modesty treats itself so badly as not only to love what is base, but also to suppose that such things are pleasing to the gods, we have, against what they say, the authority of their own master Plato, whom they esteem so highly.

19 Of the ungodliness of the art of magic, which depends on the assistance of malign spirits

Moreover, why should I not cite public opinion itself as a witness against those magic arts in which certain most wretched and ungodly men love to glory? For if they are the works of divine beings worthy of worship, why are such arts so gravely punished by the severity of the law? Was it the Christians, perhaps, who enacted the laws by which magic arts are punished? With what other meaning, then, save that these sorceries are beyond doubt pernicious to the human race, did that most illustrious of poets say: 'I swear, beloved sister, by the gods, by you, and by your sweet head, that I have recourse to magic arts only against my will?'³⁶ Again, when he speaks of these arts in another place, saying: 'I have seen him lead the standing corn across to another field',³⁷ Virgil refers to the belief that, by means of the arts which this pestilential and vile doctrine teaches, one man's harvest can be

³⁵ Virgil, *Aen.*, 7,338.

³⁶ *Aen.*, 4,492f.

³⁷ *Ecl.*, 8,98.

shifted to another's land. Does not Cicero remind us that, in the Twelve Tables – that is, in the most ancient law of the Romans – a law was inscribed prescribing the penalty to be inflicted on anyone who did this?³⁸

Finally, was it before Christian judges that Apuleius himself was accused of magic arts? If, when accused, he had known these arts to be divine and godly and in harmony with the works of the divine power, he ought not only to have confessed, but also to have professed, them. He should have condemned the laws by which these arts which are to be deemed admirable and worthy of veneration were forbidden and pronounced damnable. For by doing this he would either have persuaded the judges to adopt his own opinion, or, if they had preferred to act according to unjust laws and condemn him to death for his advocacy and praise of such arts, the demons would at least have repaid him. They would have repaid him with gifts worthy of the spirit of one who, for the sake of proclaiming their divine works, had not feared to lose his human life: just as our martyrs, when the Christian religion, by which they knew they were made safe and most glorious for all eternity, was charged to them as a crime, did not choose to evade temporal punishment by denying it. Rather, by confessing, embracing and proclaiming it, and for its sake enduring all things with faith and fortitude, and by dying with godly assurance, they shamed the laws by which it was forbidden, and caused them to be changed.

But, on the contrary, a very lengthy and elegant oration of this Platonist philosopher survives, in which he declares that he is a stranger to the crime of practising magic arts, and that he desires nothing more than to show his innocence by repudiating such acts as cannot be performed by an innocent man.³⁹ All the wonders of the sorcerers, however, whom he rightly declares worthy of condemnation, are accomplished by means of the teaching and works of demons. Why, then, does he think the demons worthy of praise? Why does he think that they are necessary for carrying our prayers to the gods, when their works are of a kind that we must shun if we wish our prayers to reach the true God?

Next, I ask what kind of human prayers does he suppose are carried to the good gods by the demons: magical prayers, or lawful

³⁸ Cf. Pliny, 28,2,17.

³⁹ *Apologia pro se (De magia)*.

ones? If magical, the gods do not wish to receive such prayers; if lawful, they do not wish to receive them by such means. If a penitent sinner pours out prayers, especially if he has committed a crime involving magic, does he really obtain pardon through the intercession of those demons through whose incitement and aid he yielded to the sin which he now laments? Or do the demons themselves, in order that they may win forgiveness for penitent sinners, first become penitents themselves, for having deceived them? No one has ever said this of the demons. If it were so, they would never have ventured to seek divine honours for themselves in the first place, with such detestable pride; for to desire to obtain through penitence the grace of pardon is to display a humility deserving of mercy.

20 Whether we are to believe that good gods are
more willing to have dealings with demons than with
men

But perhaps there is an urgent and pressing reason which compels the demons to act as mediators between the gods and men, carrying the petitions of men and bringing back the answers of the gods. What, then, is this reason and great necessity? It is, say the Platonists, the fact that no god has dealings with men.⁴⁰

What a wonderful thing the holiness of a god is, then, if he has no dealings with a man who offers supplication to him, yet allies Himself to a presumptuous demon! – if he has no dealings with a penitent man, yet allies himself to a lying demon; if he has no dealings with a man who goes to the divinity for refuge, yet allies himself to a demon who feigns divinity; if he has no dealings with a man seeking forgiveness, yet allies himself to the demon who persuaded him to commit wickedness; if he has no dealings with a man who, in his philosophical books, expels the poets from a well-founded state, yet allies himself to a demon who requires of the city's princes and pontiffs that the mockeries of the poets be represented in theatrical performances; who has no dealings with the man who forbids the attribution of crimes to the gods, yet allies himself to a demon who takes delight in the fictitious crimes of the

⁴⁰ Cf. Plato, *Symp.*, 203A.

gods; who has no dealings with the man who punishes the wicked acts of sorcerers with just laws, but who allies himself to a demon who teaches and practises the arts of magic; who has no dealings with a man who flees from the example of demons, yet allies himself to a demon who lies in wait to deceive men!

21 Whether the gods use demons as their messengers and interpreters and are deceived by them either without knowing it or knowingly

But no doubt there is a great necessity for this absurd and unworthy state of things: namely, that the gods of the aether, though they have regard for human affairs, would not know what men on earth were doing if the demons of the air did not bring them tidings, because the aether is very remote from the earth and suspended far above it, whereas the air is contiguous to both the earth and the aether.

O marvellous wisdom! Can it be that these philosophers really believe of the gods – who, they insist, are all perfect – that, on the one hand, they have regard for human affairs (otherwise they would seem unworthy of worship) yet that, on the other, they have no knowledge of human affairs because of the distance which separates the elements? The Platonists believe this in order that they may also believe that the demons are necessary agents, and therefore themselves worthy of worship, through whom the gods may learn more of the conduct of human affairs and give help to men where necessary. But, if this is so, then a demon is better known to these good gods by its bodily proximity than a man is by his goodness of mind. O most sorrowful necessity, that we should be called upon to ridicule or denounce such vanity lest divinity itself should seem vain! For if, with their own minds free from the obstacle of the body, the gods can see our minds, they do not need the demons as messengers for this purpose. If, however, the gods of the aether perceive by means of bodies of their own such bodily manifestations of the mind as speech, expression and gesture, and understand by these things whatever the demons report to them, then it is possible that they too may be deceived by the demons' lies. But if, on the other hand, the divinity of the gods cannot be deceived by the demons, then that same divinity cannot be ignorant of what we do.

But I should like the Platonists to tell me this. Have the demons – concealing the pleasure which they themselves take in such things – carried tidings to the gods of Plato's displeasure at the inventions of the poets concerning the gods' crimes? Or have they concealed both, and preferred that the gods should remain ignorant of the whole matter? Or have they reported both Plato's religious solicitude for the gods and also their own desire for theatrical displays, which is so harmful to the gods? Or have they concealed Plato's opinion, according to which he refused to allow the gods to be defamed with false crimes by the impious licence of the poets, but not blushed or feared to make known their own iniquity, according to which they love the theatrical performances in which the disgraceful deeds of the gods are celebrated? Of these four possibilities which I have proposed in the form of questions, let the Platonists choose whichever they wish; but, whichever they choose, let them notice how low an opinion they have of the good gods.

For if they choose the first, they will have to confess that it was not possible for the good gods to have dealings with the good Plato, even though he forbade things injurious to them, whereas they had dealings with the evil demons even though these exulted in such injurious things. This is because the good gods can only know a good man who is placed so far away from them by means of the assistance of evil demons whom, however, even though they are near at hand, they cannot know to be evil!

But if they choose the second possibility, and say that both these things are concealed by the demons – that the gods are entirely ignorant both of Plato's most religious law and the demons' sacrilegious delight – what, then, is there in human affairs that the gods can usefully learn through the mediation of demons, when they do not know what measures are decreed through the piety of good men to defend the honour of good gods against the lust of evil demons?

If they choose the third possibility, and reply that not only the opinion of Plato, who forbade injury to the gods, but also the wickedness of the demons, who take delight in injuries done to the gods, have been reported to the gods by these same messenger-demons, is this a report or an affront? And do the gods hear both, and understand both, yet not only fail to exclude from their presence those malign demons whose desires and acts are contrary to the dignity of the gods and the religion of Plato, but also, through the

same wicked demons, who are near to them, convey their gifts to the good Plato, who is far away from them? Are they so bound, as it were, by the chain of the elements that they can be conjoined with those who defame them, but cannot be so with one who defends them: so bound that, though they know the truth on both sides, they cannot change the weight of the air and the earth?

There remains the fourth possibility, which, if they choose it, is worse than the rest. For who could bear to suppose that the demons have reported to the gods the criminal inventions of the poets concerning the immortal gods, and the worthless mockeries of the theatres, and their own most ardent desire for all these things, and the most sweet pleasure which they take in them, yet have remained silent as to the fact that Plato, with the gravity of a philosopher, deemed that all these things should be banished from the best commonwealth? According to this possibility, the good gods are compelled to learn from such messengers the misdeeds not of others, but of those same most wicked messengers themselves, yet are not permitted to know the good deeds of the philosophers, even though the messengers do harm to the gods, and the philosophers do them honour!

22 That, despite Apuleius, we must shun the worship of demons

None of these four possibilities, then, is worthy of choice, since each would require us to think ill of the gods. What remains, therefore, is that we are by no means to accept what Apuleius tries to persuade us to believe – as do certain other philosophers of the same opinion: that the demons are placed between the gods and men as intermediaries and interpreters, who bear our petitions to the gods and bring back their answers to us. Rather, they are spirits whose sole desire is to harm us: who are entirely alien to justice, swollen with pride, livid with envy, and subtle in deceit. They do indeed dwell in the air; but they do so only because they were cast out from the sublimity of the higher heaven, and justly condemned for their irreparable transgression to dwell in this region as in a prison appropriate to them. Nor, indeed, even though the air is above the earth and the waters, are the demons on that account superior in merit to men; for we easily surpass them not in respect of our earthly bodies,

but in the godliness of mind of those who have chosen the true God as their helper.

But the demons hold sway, as over prisoners and subjects, over the many men who are clearly unworthy to share in the true religion. For the most part, by miracles and lying signs, achieved by either deeds or prophecy, they have persuaded such men to believe that they are gods. There are some, however, who have noted the vices of the demons somewhat more attentively and carefully than others. These they have not been able to persuade that they are gods; and so they have represented themselves to them as messengers between the gods and men, and as the bringers of benefits. Some men, indeed, have thought that not even this latter honour ought to be granted to them, but did not dare say so. They certainly did not believe them to be gods, because they saw that they were wicked, whereas they wished to regard all the gods as good. But they feared to offend the people by whom, as they saw, the demons were, by inveterate superstition, served with so many sacred rites and temples.

23 What Hermes Trismegistus believed concerning idolatry, and from what source he was able to know that the superstitions of Egypt were to be abolished

The Egyptian Hermes, whom they call Trismegistus, believed and wrote differently concerning these demons. For Apuleius denies that the demons are gods; but when he says that they occupy a certain intermediate place between the gods and men, so that they inevitably seem to men to be included among the gods, he does not separate the worship due to them from the religion of the gods on high. This Egyptian, however, says that some gods are made by the supreme God, and that others are made by men.

Anyone who hears this as I have expressed it will no doubt suppose that he is speaking of images, because these are the works of men's hands. But he asserts that visible and tangible images are, as it were, only the bodies of the gods, and that certain spirits have been summoned to dwell in them who have the power to do harm or to fulfil many of the desires of those by whom divine honours and the service of worship are rendered to them. To unite, therefore, by a certain art, these invisible spirits to visible objects of corporeal

matter in order to create something like animated bodies, dedicated and subject to these spirits: Hermes says that this is to make gods, and that men have indeed received this great and wondrous power of making gods.

I shall give the words of this Egyptian as they have been translated into our language.

And since our discourse concerns the kinship and fellowship of men and gods, know, O Aesculapius, the power and might of man. Just as the Lord and Father, or that which is the Supreme Being, God, is the creator of the celestial gods, so is man the maker of those gods who are content to dwell in their temples as the neighbours of mankind.

And a little later he says: 'Humanity, then, always mindful of its nature and origin, perseveres in this imitation of the divine, so that, just as the Father and Lord made eternal gods so that there should be others like Himself, so humanity has fashioned its own gods according to the likeness of its own countenance.'⁴¹

At this point Aesculapius, to whom he was speaking, answered him and said: 'Is it of statues that you speak, O Trismegistus?' Hermes replied:

I speak of statues. But you see, O Aesculapius, how even you lack faith. For I speak of statues imbued with life, and full of sensation and spirit, who perform so many and such great things; of statues prescient of things to come and foretelling them by lot, by prophecy, by dreams and by many other means; who make men sick and cure them again; who bring men sorrow or joy according to their merits. Do you not know, O Aesculapius, that Egypt is an image of heaven, or, more truly, a translation and descent of all the things which are governed and performed there: that in truth, if we may so put it, our land is the temple of the whole world? And yet, since a prudent man ought to have foreknowledge of all things, it is not right that you should be ignorant of this: that, in time to come, it will become clear that, despite their pious minds and constant service, the Egyptians have worshipped the gods in vain.⁴²

Hermes next expounds at great length what he says in this passage, where he seems to foretell the present time: the time when,

⁴¹ Apuleius, *Asclepius*, 23.

⁴² *Asclep.*, 24.

with as much vehemence and freedom as it has greater truth and holiness, the Christian religion is overthrowing all these lying fictions, so that the grace of the most true Saviour may set mankind free from the gods which man has made, and subdue him to the God by Whom man was made. But although Hermes foretells these things, he speaks as one who is a friend to these same mocking demons, and he does not expressly mention the name of Christ. On the contrary, it is with a certain grief and lamentation that he prophesies the future abolition and destruction of those rites through whose observance a likeness of heaven was preserved in Egypt. He was one of those of Whom the apostle said that 'knowing God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were they thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened; professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of corruptible man', and so on; for the passage is too long to quote in full.⁴³

Hermes, indeed, says many things concerning the Maker of this world which have the appearance of truth. I do not know how he has been brought so low by the darkening of his heart as to desire men to be always in subjection to gods who, as he himself confesses, are made by men, and whose future abolition he laments: as if there could be anything more wretched than for a man to be in thrall to what he himself has made. For a man can more easily become less than a man by worshipping the works of his own hands as if they were gods than can the works of his own hands become gods through his worship of them. It can more readily happen that a man 'that is in honour, but understandeth not' may become 'like the beasts that perish',⁴⁴ than that a work of man may be placed above the work of God, made in His own image: that is, above man himself. Deservedly, then, does man fall away from Him Who made him, when he places above himself that which he himself has made.

The Egyptian Hermes mourned for these vain, deceitful, pernicious, sacrilegious things because he knew that the time was coming when they would be taken away; but his mourning was as impudent as his knowledge was imprudent. For it was not the Holy Spirit

⁴³ Rom. 1,21ff.

⁴⁴ Psalm 49,20.

Who revealed these things to him, as He did to the holy prophets who, when they saw what was to come, cried out in exultation: 'If a man shall make gods, lo, they are not gods';⁴⁵ and in another place: 'And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered.'⁴⁶ And, as touching the matter before us, the holy Isaiah prophesies specifically in relation to Egypt: 'And the idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence, and their heart shall be overcome in them',⁴⁷ and other things of this kind.

In the same class as the prophets are those who, knowing what was to come, rejoiced when it came to pass. Such was Simeon,⁴⁸ or Anna,⁴⁹ who at once recognised Jesus when He was born; or Elizabeth, who recognised Him in the Spirit even when He was conceived;⁵⁰ or Peter, who, by the revelation of the Father, said: 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.'⁵¹ But those spirits who indicated the time of their own coming ruin to the Egyptian Hermes are the same as those who, when the Lord was present in the flesh, said with trembling, 'Art thou come hither to destroy us before the time?'⁵² They asked this either because, though they knew that destruction must indeed come, it had come upon them suddenly, when they had believed that it would come later; or because, when they spoke of destruction, they meant that they were now unmasked and hence despised. And, indeed, this was a destruction 'before the time', that is, before the time of judgment, when they are to be punished with eternal damnation in company with all men who are enmeshed in fellowship with them. Thus speaks a religion which never deceives nor is deceived. For it is not like Hermes, who is, as it were, 'tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine',⁵³ and who, mixing true things with false, grieves over the coming destruction of a religion which he then confesses to be in error.

⁴⁵ Jer. 16,20.

⁴⁶ Zech. 13,2.

⁴⁷ Is. 19,1.

⁴⁸ Luke 2,25ff.

⁴⁹ Luke 2,36ff.

⁵⁰ Luke 1,41ff.

⁵¹ Matt. 16,16.

⁵² Matt. 8,29.

⁵³ Eph. 4,14.

24 How Hermes confesses the error of his forefathers, though he also mourns the coming destruction of that error

Much later, Hermes resumes his thread and once again discusses the gods which men have made, speaking as follows:

But now let what I have said on this subject be enough. Let us return once more to man and to reason, that divine gift by virtue of which man is said to be a rational animal. For the things which have been said concerning man, wonderful as they are, are not the most wonderful. Arousing greater admiration than all other wonders is the fact that man has been able to discover the divine nature, and to make it. For our forefathers invented the art of making gods out of some material substance suited to the purpose. They did this because, thanks to their unbelief, and to the fact that they did not attend to worship and divine religion, they erred greatly in their conception of the gods. Thus, because they could not make souls, they invoked the souls of demons or of angels and united them with holy images and divine mysteries, so that, through those souls, their idols might have the power of doing both good and harm.⁵⁴

I do not know if the demons themselves, if called upon to make confession, would confess as much as Hermes has done. He says that his forefathers invented the art of making gods because they 'erred greatly' in their conception of the gods, by reason of their unbelief and because they did not attend to worship and divine religion. Did he say that they at least erred in a moderate fashion? Or was he content to say 'they erred' without adding 'greatly'? No, it was because they 'erred greatly' by reason of their unbelief and in not attending to worship and divine religion that men invented the art of making gods. And yet it is the inevitable future loss of this art, invented by great error and by turning aside from worship and divine religion, that this wise man deplores as though it were divine religion! Consider if it is not by divine power on the one hand that he is compelled to reveal the past error of his forefathers, and by diabolic power on the other that he is led to mourn the

⁵⁴ *Asclep.*, 37

future punishment of the demons. For if those forefathers erred greatly in their conception of the gods, through unbelief and a turning of the mind away from worship and true religion, and so invented the art of making gods, what wonder is it if everything done by this detestable art through its turning away from divine religion should itself be abolished by divine religion: abolished when truth corrects error, faith confounds unbelief, and conversion corrects those who are turned away?

For if Hermes had said, without mentioning a reason, simply that his forefathers had invented the art of making gods, it would then have been for us, if we were mindful of what is right and godly, to note and see that they would never have arrived at this art by which a man can make gods if they had not strayed from the truth: if they had believed those things which are worthy of God, and if they had directed their minds to worship and divine religion. If, on the other hand, it had been we who had said that the causes of this art lie in the great error and unbelief of men and the turning away of a misguided and unfaithful mind from divine religion, the impudence of those who resist the truth would then have been to some extent bearable. But when Hermes himself, who admires above all other things in man this art by which it is given to him to make gods, and mourns because the time is coming when all those figments of gods instituted by men are to be swept away by the command of the laws themselves: when even he nonetheless confesses and explains the causes by which this art was discovered, saying that his forefathers invented the art of making gods because they erred greatly by reason of their unbelief, and because they did not attend to worship and divine religion: what are we to say? Or, rather, what ought we to do but give all the thanks we can to the Lord our God, Who has swept those things away by causes which are the opposite of the ones by which they were instituted? For what was established by a multitude of errors has been abolished by the way of truth; what was established by unbelief has been taken away by faith; and what was established by turning away from the worship of divine religion has been abolished by turning back to the one true and holy God.

Nor is this true only in Egypt, for which land in particular the spirit of the demons mourned in the person of Hermes. It is true in all the earth, which sings unto the Lord a new song, as the truly

sacred and truly prophetic Scriptures have proclaimed. For it is written: 'O sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord, all the earth.'⁵⁵ For the title of this psalm is, 'When the house was built after the captivity'; and a house is indeed now being built for the Lord in all the earth: the City of God, which is holy Church, after that captivity in which demonic forces held prisoner those men who, because they believed in God, have become living stones in His house.⁵⁶ For although man made the gods, he who made them was not any the less possessed by them when he was degraded into their fellowship by worshipping them: into the fellowship, I say, not of stupid idols, but of cunning demons. For what are idols except what the same Scriptures say they are: 'Eyes have they, but they see not?'⁵⁷ Whatever else is to be said of materials carved, however cleverly, into effigies, they still lack life and sensation. Unclean spirits, however, united with those same effigies by nefarious arts, have miserably enslaved the souls of their worshippers by subduing them into fellowship with themselves. And so the apostle says: 'We know that an idol is nothing, but those things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons, and not to God; and I would not ye should have fellowship with demons.'⁵⁸ After this captivity, therefore, in which men have been held by malign demons, the house of God is being built in all the earth. Hence the title of that psalm in which it is said,

O Sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless His name; show forth his salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among all people. For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised: He is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are demons: but the Lord made the heavens.⁵⁹

Hermes grieved, then, because a time was coming when the worship of idols, and the lordship of the demonic powers over those who worshipped them, was to be abolished. At the instigation of an evil spirit, he desired that the captivity which, as the psalmist sings,

⁵⁵ Psalm 96, 1.

⁵⁶ Cf. 1 Pet. 2, 5.

⁵⁷ Psalm 115, 5.

⁵⁸ 1 Cor. 10, 20.

⁵⁹ Psalm 96, 1ff.

was to end with the building of the house of the Lord in all the earth should continue for ever. Hermes foretold these things with mourning, but the prophet foretold them with rejoicing. Moreover, because the Spirit is victorious Who sang of these things through the holy prophets, even Hermes himself was, in a wondrous manner, compelled to confess that those very things which he did not wish to see abolished, and for which he grieved, had been instituted not by prudent, faithful and religious men, but by the erring, the unbelieving, and those who were turned away from worship and divine religion. And, though he calls them gods, nonetheless, when he says that they were made by such men as we certainly ought not to be, he shows, whether he wishes to or not, that they should not be worshipped by men who are not like those who made them: that is, that they should not be worshipped by men who are prudent, faithful and religious. At the same time, he also demonstrates that the very men who made them had invented for themselves, so that they might have gods, those who were no gods. And so the saying of the prophet is true: 'If a man make gods, behold, they are no gods.'

So much for such gods, then, worshipped by such men and made by the art of such men; so much, that is, for such demons who, through I know not what art, are bound by the chains of their own desires to idols. But when Hermes said of these that they are gods made by men, he at least did not give them the task assigned to the demons by the Platonist Apuleius, of whom we have already said enough, and whose beliefs we have shown to be inconsistent and absurd. He did not give them the task of being interpreters and intercessors between the gods made by men and the men whom God has made, carrying the prayers of men to the gods and bringing back their gifts. For it is exceedingly foolish to believe that gods made by men can have more influence with gods made by God than men can have themselves, who were themselves made by the same God.

A demon bound to an idol by an ungodly art, therefore, is a god made by man; but it is a god only to a particular kind of man, not to all mankind. What manner of god is it, then, that a man would not make unless he were in error, unbelieving, and turned away from worship and divine religion? Again, the demons who are worshipped in the temples and introduced into images – that is, into

visible likenesses of themselves – through I know not what art by men who made gods for themselves by means of this art because they had strayed and turned away from worship and divine religion: these cannot be messengers or interpreters between men and the gods. They cannot be, both because of their wholly base and wicked characters and because men, even when in error, unbelieving and turned away from worship and divine religion, are still beyond doubt better than those gods whom they have made for themselves by their own art. And so the conclusion that remains is that the power which those gods possess they possess as demons, and that they do only harm: either by pretending to confer benefits (in which case the harm is made all the greater by the deceit) or else openly. They cannot, however, do any harm at all except when this is permitted by the deep and secret providence of God. Moreover, since they are not intermediaries between the gods and men, it is not because of the friendship of the gods that they can exercise great sway over men. For it is entirely impossible for such demons to be the friends of those good gods whom we call holy angels and rational creatures, who dwell in the holy habitations of heaven, ‘whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers’.⁶⁰ They are as far separated from these in the affection of their soul as vice is from virtue and malice from goodness.

25 Of those things which can be common to the holy angels and to good men

By no means, therefore, must we solicit the benevolence or beneficence of the gods – or, rather, of the good angels – through the supposed mediation of demons. Rather, we should do this by resembling them in good will; for, by this means, we are able to be with them, to live with them, and to worship with them the God Whom they worship, even though we cannot see them with our bodily eyes. For it is not in respect of bodily location that we are distant from them, but, rather, in merit of life and in the weakness of our infirmity, because we are miserably unlike them in will. It is not, that is, because we dwell on earth in a fleshly state that we are not united with them, but because, in the impurity of our heart, we are

⁶⁰ Coloss. 1,16.

mindful of earthly things.⁶¹ But at the present time, while we are being healed so that we may be as they are, we are brought near to them by faith if, with their assistance, we believe that He Who makes them blessed will bless us also.

26 That the religion of the pagans had to do entirely with dead men

We may also note that this Egyptian, in deploring the coming time – the time when those things would be abolished from Egypt which, as he confesses, were instituted by men who were in error, unbelieving and turned away from worship and divine religion: this Egyptian said, among other things: ‘Then this land, this holy seat of shrines and temples, will be full of sepulchres and dead men’⁶² – as if, indeed, men would not die if these things were not taken away; or as if the dead would be laid somewhere else than in the earth; or as if it were not true that, as the times and days roll by, the greater must be the number of sepulchres, because of the greater number of the dead!

But what he seems to deplore is the fact that the memorials of our martyrs are taking the place of the temples and shrines of the gods. He does this so that, when those who are hostile to us and perverse in mind read these things, they will suppose that, whereas gods were worshipped in temples by the pagans, we worship the dead in tombs. For with such blindness do ungodly men stumble over mountains, as it were, and will not see things which strike them in the eyes, that they do not notice that, in all the literature of the pagans, we do not find any, or scarcely any, gods who were not originally men upon whom divine honours were bestowed when they died. I pass over what Varro says, that all the dead were deemed by the pagans to be gods of the kind called *manes*. He proves this by those sacred rites which are performed for almost all the dead; and, in this context, he mentions funeral games, as though this were the very highest proof of divinity, because games are not usually celebrated except in honour of divine beings.

But Hermes himself, with whom we are now dealing, says with sorrow: ‘Then this land, this holy seat of shrines and temples, will

⁶¹ Cf. Phil. 3,19; Coloss. 3,2.

⁶² *Asclep.*, 24.

be full of sepulchres and dead men'; and then, in the same book, he attests that the gods of Egypt were dead men! For when he has said that his forefathers greatly erred in their conception of the gods by reason of their unbelief and because they did not attend to worship and divine religion, and that they therefore invented the art of making gods, he adds: 'Thus, because they could not make souls, they invoked the souls of demons or of angels and united them with holy images and divine mysteries, so that, through those souls, their idols might have the power of doing both good and harm.' And he then continues, as if to prove this by examples, and says:

Your grandfather, O Aesculapius, the first discoverer of medicine, to whom was consecrated on a mountain in Libya, near the shore of the crocodiles, a temple in which lies his earthly self, that is, his body – for the rest of him, or, rather, the whole of him, if the whole man consists in sentient life, has returned in higher form to heaven – even now, by his divine power, extends to men who are sick all those aids which he used formerly to extend to them by the art of medicine.⁶³

Behold: Hermes says that a dead man is worshipped as a god in the place where he had his sepulchre – falsely and mistakenly, however, because he has gone back to heaven.

Next, he adds: 'Does not Hermes, my ancestor, whose name I bear, abiding in the place which is called by his name, help and protect all mortals who come to him from every place?' For this elder Hermes – that is, Mercury – whom he calls his ancestor, is said to have had his habitation in Hermopolis: that is, the city which bears his name. Behold: two gods whom he says were once men – Aesculapius and Mercury. As to Aesculapius, the Greeks and the Latins hold the same opinion. As to Mercury, however, many do not believe that he was mortal; yet Hermes attests that he was his ancestor. Perhaps Hermes the god and Hermes the ancestor of Trismegistus are two different individuals who bear the same name? I do not much wish to argue as to whether or not they are two different individuals. Suffice it to say that, according to the testimony of this same Trismegistus his descendant, who is held in such high esteem

⁶³ *Asclep.*, 37.

by his followers, Hermes the god is, like Aesculapius, a god who was once a man.

Hermes then goes on to add: 'We know how many benefits Isis, the wife of Osiris, confers when she is propitious, and how great are the evils that she sends when she is angry!' Next, having spoken of Isis in the words just quoted – 'how great are the evils that she sends when she is angry' – he goes on to say: 'For it is easy for earthly and material gods to be angry, made and composed as they are by men out of both natures.' He says this in order to show that there is a class of gods which men have made through their art. Hence, we are given to understand that, to his mind, the demons originated in the souls of the dead and, through the art invented by men who erred greatly, and who were unbelieving and irreligious, were introduced into images, because those who made such gods were at any rate not able to make souls. When, therefore, he says 'both natures', he is speaking of body and soul: the demon is the soul, and the image the body. 'Thus it has come to pass', he says, 'that certain animals are regarded as sacred by the Egyptians, and that individual cities so honour the souls of those who were consecrated as gods while they lived that they live according to their laws and are known by their names'.

What, then, has become of that sorrowful complaint that the land of Egypt, the most holy seat of shrines and temples, was in time to come to be filled with sepulchres and dead men? The deceiving spirit at whose prompting Hermes said this was, indeed, compelled to confess through him that the land was even then full of sepulchres and of dead men whom the people worshipped as gods! But it was the grief of the demons which spoke through him; for they were bewailing the punishments which were to destroy them at the shrines of the holy martyrs. For in many such places they are tortured and made to confess, and cast out from the bodies of men whom they have possessed.

27 Of the manner in which Christians pay honour to their martyrs

We, however, do not establish temples, priesthoods, rites and sacrifices for these same martyrs, for they themselves are not gods; rather, their God is our God. We honour their memorials, of course,

as being those of holy men of God, who have striven for the truth even unto the death of their bodies, so that the true religion might be made known and the false and feigned defeated; for if there were any before them who held the same beliefs as they, they kept them hidden through fear. But which of the faithful has ever heard a priest standing at an altar, even one built over the holy body of a martyr for the honour and worship of God, say when he prayed, 'I offer sacrifice to thee, O Peter, or Paul, or Cyprian?' For it is to God that sacrifices are offered at their memorials, Who made them both men and martyrs, and united them in heavenly honour with the holy angels. We celebrate such sacrifices both so that we may give thanks to the true God for their victories, and so that, as we renew our memory of them, we may urge ourselves to imitate them in winning such crowns and palms, invoking the same God to our aid. Therefore, whatever offerings are brought by the pious to the places of the martyrs, these are only adornments of their memorials and not sacred or sacrificial objects given to the dead as though they were gods. Even those who bring food there – and this is not done by Christians of the better-instructed kind, and in most countries it is not the custom: but even those who do this do so because they desire that it should be sanctified to them through the merits of the martyrs in the name of the Lord of the martyrs.⁶⁴ They say a prayer when they have laid it before the shrine and then take it away, either to eat it or to give of it to the needy. But he who knows that the sacrifice of the Christians, which is indeed offered there, is one sacrifice, also knows that these are not sacrifices offered to the martyrs.

It is, then, neither with divine honours nor with human crimes, with which our adversaries worship their gods, that we honour our martyrs; nor do we offer sacrifices to them; nor do we make sacred rites out of their evil deeds. It is written that Isis, the Egyptian goddess and wife of Osiris, and all their ancestors, were royal personages. (Isis, while sacrificing to her ancestors, found a crop of barley, of which she showed some ears to her husband the king and his counsellor Mercury; and for this reason our adversaries wish to identify her with Ceres.) All the great evils which she wrought were recorded for posterity not by poets, but in the mystic writings of

⁶⁴ Cf. *Confess.*, 6,2.

the Egyptians. Let those who will and can do so read the letter written by Alexander to his mother Olympias in which he relates the things revealed to him by the priest Leo; and let those who read reflect upon it and see what manner of men they were, and what their deeds were, for whom sacred rites were instituted after their death as if they were gods. However much our adversaries hold them to be gods, God forbid that they should dare to compare them in any respect to our holy martyrs; whom we, however, do not regard as gods. For we do not appoint priests for our martyrs, nor do we offer sacrifices to them; for it would be improper, unworthy and unlawful to do so: such things are due only to God. Neither do we delight them with their own crimes, nor with disgraceful exhibitions of the kind in which the crimes of the gods are celebrated: either crimes committed by them when they were men, or, if they were not men, falsehoods devised for the delight of noxious demons.

The god of Socrates, if he had a god, cannot have belonged this class of demons; but perhaps those who wished to excel in the art of making gods imposed a god of this kind upon a man who was a stranger to that art, and innocent of it.

What more is there to say, then? No one of even moderate prudence supposes that these spirits are to be worshipped for the sake of the blessed life which is to come after death. But perhaps our adversaries will say that all the gods are good, while some of the demons are bad and some good, and that it is the good who are to be worshipped so that, through them, we may come to a life of eternal blessedness. This is the claim which we must consider in the following book.

Book IX

I The point reached in the foregoing argument, and what is left of the question to be discussed

Some have held the opinion that there are both good and bad gods.¹ Others, thinking better of the gods, have ascribed so much honour and praise to them that they have not dared to believe that any god is bad. But those who have said that some gods are good and some bad have included the demons under the name 'gods'; and sometimes, though more rarely, they have called the gods demons. Indeed, they have pointed out that Jupiter himself, whom they wish to say is the king and prince of the rest of the gods, is called a demon by Homer.²

But those who assert that all the gods are good, and that they are far superior to those men who are deemed to be good, are with good reason troubled by the deeds of the demons. They cannot deny them, nor can they attribute them to the gods, who they say are all good; and so they are compelled to make a distinction between gods and demons. Thus, whatever rightly displeases them in the depraved deeds of occult spirits, and in the desires through which they manifest their power, they believe to be due to demons, not gods. They believe also that, because no god has dealings with mankind,³ these same demons are appointed as mediators between men and the gods, to carry our prayers to them and to bring their answers back. This is what the Platonists, the most distinguished and noble of the philosophers, believe; and it was with them, because of their excellence, that we chose to examine the question of whether the worship of many gods is of service in achieving the blessed life which is to come after death. For this reason, we asked in the preceding book how the demons can be the near neighbours and friends who reconcile good men with the good gods. And we have shown that this cannot possibly be so; for the demons rejoice in things which good and prudent men shun and condemn: that is, in the sacrilegious tales told not of men, but of the very gods, by

¹ Cf. Lactantius, *Div. inst.*, 2,14,6; 4,27,14f.

² *Iliad*, 1,222; Plutarch, *De orac. defect.*, 415,47ff.

³ Apuleius, *De deo Socr.*, 4; Plato, *Symp.*, 203A.

the poets, and in the wicked and damnable violence of the magic arts.

2 Whether among the demons, to whom the gods are superior, there is any kind of good spirit by whose assistance the human soul can achieve blessedness

As I promised at the end of the previous book, then, I shall in the present book discuss, insofar as it pertains to our present question, not the difference between one god and another (for all of them are said to be good) and not the difference between gods and demons (for the Platonists separate gods from men by a great height and distance, and place the demons between gods and men), but the difference, since they wish to say that there is one, which exists among the demons themselves. For it is for the most part customary to say that some demons are bad and others good; and this is a belief which, whether held by the Platonists or anyone else, we must by no means neglect to discuss. Otherwise, someone might suppose that he ought to follow the good demons, and seek and strive to be reconciled through their mediation with the gods, all of whom he believes to be good, so that he may be with them after death. Thus ensnared and deceived by the cunning of malign spirits, such a one would wander far from the true God, with Whom alone, and in Whom alone, and by Whom alone the human – that is, the rational and intellectual – soul is blessed.

3 What Apuleius ascribes to the demons, to whom, though he does not deny them reason, he assigns no degree of virtue

What, then, is the difference between good and evil demons? The Platonist Apuleius, though he discusses them in general terms and speaks at such great length of their aerial bodies, is silent as to the virtues of soul with which, if they were good, they would be endowed. He is silent, then, as to that which might give them happiness. He cannot, however, remain silent as to that which shows that they are miserable. For he confesses that their minds, in respect of which he has asserted that they are rational, are not imbued and

fortified even with sufficient virtue to resist to any degree the irrational passions of the soul. Rather, they are themselves agitated by storms and tempests, as it were, as is usually the case with stupid minds. Here, indeed, are his own words on the subject: 'It is of this category of demons', he says,

that the poets are wont to write – and they are not far from the truth – when they depict the gods as hating or loving some particular men. They prosper and uplift some; but others, by contrast, they oppose and afflict. The demons, then, experience mercy, indignation, grief, joy and every aspect of human feeling. Their hearts are moved in the same way as ours, and their minds are tossed upon a heaving sea by all their thoughts. All such storms and tempests, then, banish them far from the tranquillity of the celestial gods.⁴

Can there be any doubt that, in these words, it is not some inferior part of their souls that is said to be disturbed like a stormy sea by the tempests of the passions, but the very mind in respect of which the demons are said to be rational creatures? They cannot, then, be compared even to wise men, who, when they are assailed in this life by such disturbances of soul – and human infirmity is not immune from them – resist them with untroubled mind. Such wise men do not yield to the temptation to approve or do anything which might turn them aside from the path of wisdom and the law of righteousness. The demons, however, are like foolish and unrighteous mortals: not in their bodies, but in their characters. I might, indeed, say that they are worse; for they are more hardened, and cannot be made whole by due punishment. Their minds, then, are tossed upon a sea, as Apuleius puts it; nor have they in any part of their soul the truth and virtue by which such turbulent and depraved passions might be repulsed.

4 The beliefs of the Peripatetics and Stoics as to the disturbances which assail the mind

There are two opinions among the philosophers as to those motions of the mind which the Greeks call *pathe*. (Some of our writers, such

⁴ *De deo Socr.*, 12.

as Cicero,⁵ call them disturbances, others call them affections or affects, and others again, like Apuleius, call them passions, which expresses the Greek word more closely.) Certain philosophers, then, say that these disturbances or affections or passions assail even the wise man, though moderated and controlled by reason in that he imposes laws upon them by the mastery of his mind, by which they are reduced to their necessary limits. This is what the Platonists think, and the Aristotelians also, since Aristotle, who founded the Peripatetic school, was a pupil of Plato. Others, however, like the Stoics, believe that the wise man is not subject to passions of this kind. But Cicero, in his book on good and evil called *De finibus*, argues convincingly that the latter, that is, the Stoics, are here at odds with the Platonists and Peripatetics in words only, and not in substance. For the Stoics refuse to call bodily and external things 'goods'. Rather, they call them 'advantages', because they consider that there is no good for man except virtue, and that this is the art of living well, which exists only in the mind. The other philosophers simply use the language of ordinary speech and call these things 'goods'; but they hold that, in comparison with virtue, which consists in living well, they are little things and of small value. It is clear from this that, whatever they are called by the two parties, whether 'goods' or 'advantages', they are nonetheless held in the same esteem by both, and that, in this question, the Stoics are only taking pleasure in a novel use of words. It seems to me, therefore, that here also, when it is asked whether the passions of the mind affect the wise man or whether he is entirely a stranger to them, the controversy arises out of words rather than things. For I consider that, as far as the pith of the matter is concerned, rather than the mere sound of words, the view which the Stoics hold is no different from that of the Platonists and Peripatetics.

In order not to make the discussion too long, I shall omit other proofs by which this might be shown; but I will state one very strong piece of evidence. In his book called *Noctes Atticae*, Aulus Gellius, a man whose style is most elegant and eloquent and whose learning extends to many things, tells us that he once made a sea-voyage with a distinguished Stoic philosopher.⁶ Aulus Gellius

⁵ *Tusc. disp.*, 4,6,11.

⁶ *Noct. Att.*, 19,1

relates at length and in detail what I shall only touch on briefly; but, when the sky and sea grew threatening and the ship was tossed about and in great peril, this philosopher grew pale with fear. Those present noted this, and, even though death was so close, they were most curious to know whether the philosopher's mind would be disturbed. When the tempest had subsided and safety made conversation – or, indeed, gossip – possible, one of those who had boarded the ship, a wealthy and pleasure-loving Asiatic, jokingly teased the philosopher with having shown fear and grown pale while he himself had remained unmoved by impending disaster. But the philosopher recalled the answer of Aristippus the Socratic when, in similar circumstances, a man of like character had ventured to speak to him in the same way, and he had replied: 'You were quite right not to be anxious for the soul of an extravagant scoundrel; but I was bound to fear for the soul of Aristippus.'⁷ When the rich man had been disposed of by this reply, Aulus Gellius asked the philosopher – not to annoy him, but in order to learn from him – what the reason for his fear had been. And the philosopher, willing to teach a man so zealous in his pursuit of knowledge, at once drew forth from his satchel a book of the Stoic Epictetus, in which were written doctrines in keeping with the utterances of Zeno and Chrysippus, who were, as we know, the founders of the Stoic school.

Aulus Gellius says that, in this book, he read that the Stoics believe that the soul experiences certain mental images, which they call *phantasiae*, and that it is not in our power to determine whether and when these shall strike the soul. When these images come about as a result of terrifying and awesome things, they of necessity move the soul even of the wise man. Thus, he grows pale with fear for a little while, or he is oppressed by sadness, insofar as these images hinder the action of the mind and reason. This does not, however, cause the mind to fear any evil, nor to approve of these images nor consent to them. For such consent, they hold, is within our power; and the difference between the mind of a wise man and that of a fool is that the fool's mind yields to these same passions and adapts itself to them, whereas the wise man, though he experiences them of necessity, nonetheless retains with mind unshaken a true and

⁷ Diogenes Laertius, 2,8,7.

steadfast perception of those things which he ought rationally to seek or avoid.

I have, then, expounded as well as I could, not, indeed, more elegantly, but certainly more briefly and, as I think, more clearly than Aulus Gellius, what he relates that he read, in Epictetus's book, of that philosopher's sayings and opinions, which are derived from the teachings of the Stoics. In view of these things, then, there is no difference, or almost none, between the opinion of the Stoics and that of the other philosophers concerning the passions and disturbances of the mind; for both sides maintain that the mind and reason of the wise man are not under the dominion of the passions. And perhaps the reason why the Stoics say that the passions do not affect the wise man is that the wisdom which the wise man assuredly has is not in the least clouded by any error or overthrown by any misfortune. But when passions do assail the mind of the wise man – even though they do not disturb the serenity of his wisdom – they do so by reason of those things which the Stoics call 'advantages' and 'disadvantages', although they do not wish to call them 'goods' or 'evils'. For if the philosopher attached no value to the things which he thought himself about to lose in a shipwreck – that is, his life or his bodily wellbeing – then surely he would not have been so terrified by the peril as to betray his fear by the testimony of his pallor. He might, however, suffer such disturbance yet still hold to the firm conviction that life and the wellbeing of the body, the loss of which was threatened by the violence of the tempest, are not goods which make those who have them good, as virtue does.

But when they say that these things are not to be called goods but advantages, we are to regard this as a dispute over words, not as a genuine distinction between things. For what does it matter whether it is more appropriate to call them goods or advantages, when Stoic and Peripatetic alike tremble and grow pale with the fear of losing them? They do not call them by the same names, but they hold them in the same esteem. For both certainly tell us that if they were urged to commit some wicked or criminal act on pain of losing these goods or advantages, they would rather lose those things which secure the safety and comfort of the body than commit acts that violate justice. The mind in which this belief is firmly established, then, permits no disturbances to prevail in it contrary to reason, even though these assail the baser parts of the soul. On

the contrary, the mind itself is master of all such disturbances, and, by withholding its consent from them and resisting them, exercises a reign of virtue. Such a mind was that of Aeneas, whom Virgil describes when he says, 'His mind remains unmoved; tears flow in vain.'⁸

5 That the passions which assail the souls of
Christians do not draw them into vice, but exercise
their virtue

It is not here necessary to show at length and diligently what the Divine Scripture which contains Christian knowledge teaches concerning these passions. Scripture, indeed, places the mind itself under the governance and help of God, and the passions under the mind, so that they may be moderated and bridled and turned to righteous use. Within our discipline, then, we do not so much ask whether a pious soul is angry, as why he is angry; not whether he is sad, but whence comes his sadness; not whether he is afraid, but what he fears. For I do not think that any right-minded person would condemn anger directed at a sinner in order to correct him; or sadness on behalf of one who is afflicted, in order to comfort him; or fear for one in peril, lest he perish. The Stoics, indeed, are wont to reproach even compassion.⁹ But how much more honourable it would have been if the Stoic in Aulus Gellius's story had been disturbed by compassion for a fellow man, in order to comfort him, rather than by fear of shipwreck! Far better and more humane and more in keeping with the sensibilities of the godly are the words of Cicero in praise of Caesar. He says: 'None of your virtues is more admirable or more loved than your compassion.'¹⁰ And what is compassion but a kind of fellow feeling in our hearts for the misery of another which compels us to help him if we can? This impulse is the servant of right reason when compassion is displayed in such a way as to preserve righteousness, as when alms are distributed to the needy or forgiveness extended to the penitent. Cicero, so eminent an orator, did not hesitate to call compassion a virtue,

⁸ *Aen.*, 4,449.

⁹ Cf. Seneca, *De clem.*, 2,5; Cicero, *Tusc. disp.*, 3,9,20; 3,10,21; *Pro Muren.*, 29,61.

¹⁰ *Pro Ligario*, 12,37.

whereas the Stoics are not ashamed to number it among the vices – even though, as the book of that most distinguished Stoic Epictetus, derived from the teachings of Zeno and Chrysippus, who were the founders of that school, has taught us, they admit that passions of this kind arise even in the soul of the wise man who they wish to say is free from all vice. It follows from this, then, that the Stoics do not deem those same passions to be vices when they assail the wise man, because they cannot induce him to act contrary to reason and virtue. It follows also that the opinion of the Peripatetics, and of the Platonists also, is exactly the same as that of the Stoics themselves. But, as Cicero says,¹¹ mere verbal controversy has always been a scourge of the poor Greeks, who long for contention rather than truth.

However, it may fairly be asked whether our being subject to passions of this kind even while doing good works belongs only to the infirmity of this present life. For the holy angels may punish without anger those whom they receive for punishment under the eternal law of God; and they may minister to the sorrowful without any fellow-feeling of sorrow; and when those whom they love are in peril, they may help them without themselves feeling fear. Yet ordinary human speech ascribes such passions to them also; for, though they have none of our infirmity, their actions resemble the actions to which those passions move us. So too, according to the Scriptures, God Himself is angered; yet He is not disturbed by any passion. For this word is used to indicate the effect of His vengeance, rather than any disturbance to which He is subject.

6 Of the passions which, according to Apuleius, agitate the demons through whose agency, he asserts, men secure the support of the gods

Leaving aside the question of the holy angels, however, let us for the time being consider what the Platonists say of the demons appointed to mediate between the gods and men: that they are tossed by the storms of passion. For if their minds remained free, and rose above these passions even while undergoing them, Apuleius would not have said that 'their hearts are moved in the same

¹¹ *De orat.*, I, II, 47.

way as ours, and their minds are tossed upon a heaving sea by all their thoughts'. Their minds, then – that is, the superior part of their soul, by virtue of which they are rational creatures, whose virtue and wisdom, if they had any, would rise above the turbulent passions of the lower parts of the soul, and would rule and moderate them: their minds, I say, are, as this Platonist confesses, tossed upon a sea of passions. The minds of the demons, therefore, are subject to the passions of lust, fear, anger, and every other such thing. What part of them, then, is free and in possession of the wisdom by means of which they may please the gods and encourage men to approach more closely to good morals? For their own minds are subjugated and oppressed by vicious passions; and, in proportion as they are possessed of the desire to harm us, so do they fiercely strive to use whatever reason nature has given them to mislead and deceive us.

**7 The Platonists assert that the fictions of the poets
defame the gods when they depict them as engaging
in factional strife; for it is not the gods who are
subject to such strife, but the demons**

Someone may say that it is not all the demons, but only the evil ones, that the tales of the poets represent – not without truth – as hating and loving certain men. For it was of the evil demons that Apuleius said that 'their minds are tossed upon a heaving sea by all their thoughts'. But how are we to understand this when, having said this, he then describes all the demons, and not only the evil ones, as being intermediate between the gods and men by virtue of their aerial bodies? The falsehood of the poets, Apuleius says, lies in the fact that, under the protection of poetic licence, they make demons into gods: they give them the names of gods, and they assign them as friends or enemies to such men as they choose. In fact, he says, the gods are far removed in character from the demons, by both their heavenly location and the richness of their blessedness. This, then, is a poetic fiction: to say that those demons are gods who are not gods, and to say that, under the names of gods, they quarrel among themselves over the men whom they love or hate with partisan zeal. But Apuleius says that this fiction is not far from the truth; for even though it calls the demons gods when they are not gods, it nonetheless describes them in their true

character as demons. In this connexion, he speaks of Homer's Minerva, 'who, in the midst of the assembled Greeks, intervened to restrain Achilles'.¹² This Minerva he takes to be a poetic fiction; for he supposes the true Minerva to be a goddess, and he places her among the gods, whom he believes to be all good and blessed, in the upper reaches of the aether, far removed from converse with mortals. But that there was a demon who favoured the Greeks and opposed the Trojans; and that there were others, who aided the Trojans against the Greeks, whom the same poet commemorates under the name of Venus or Mars (gods who are in reality established in their heavenly habitations, and who do not act in such a way); and that these demons fought among themselves on behalf of those whom they loved and against those whom they hated: when the poets say all this, Apuleius confesses, they are not far from the truth. For they are speaking of beings whose hearts are moved in the same way as ours, as Apuleius attests, and whose minds are tossed upon a heaving sea by all their thoughts. It is for this reason that they can love or hate: not for the sake of justice, but in the way that the mob, whom they resemble, does when, in relation to beast-slayers and charioteers, it displays its own partisan zeal on behalf of one and against another.¹³ This Platonist philosopher, then, seems to have been at pains to ensure that, when these tales were sung by the poets, they should not be believed of the gods themselves, of whose names the poets make use in their fictions, but of the demons who occupy the middle region.

8 Of the definition given by Apuleius the Platonist of gods who dwell in heaven, demons who dwell in the air, and men who dwell on the earth

What? Are we not to take account of the definition of the demons which Apuleius himself gives, and in which he certainly includes them all in one category? He says that the demons are animal in genus, passive in soul, rational in mind, aerial in body, and eternal in duration.¹⁴ But, in listing these five qualities, he has mentioned

¹² *De deo Socr.*, 10; cf. Homer, *Iliad*, 1, 193ff.

¹³ Cf. Augustine, *Enarrat. in Psalm.*, 39, 8f; 53, 10.

¹⁴ *De deo Socr.*, 13.

nothing at all which the demons seem to have in common specifically with good men, and which is not found in bad. For, having first spoken of the gods in heaven, he then extended his description somewhat, to include men themselves, and he said that their station is a lowly and earthly one. He said this so that, having described the two extremes, he might then speak, in the third place, of the demons who are between them. 'Men who dwell upon the earth, then', he says,

rejoice in reason. They are gifted with speech, immortal in soul, mortal in members, weak and anxious in mind, brutish and obnoxious in body,¹⁵ dissimilar in their characters, alike in their errors, obstinate in their audacity, pertinacious in their hope. Their labour is vain, their fortune precarious. Each of them is mortal, even though their whole race is eternal, with each generation replaced by another. Their time flies swiftly away, but their wisdom is slow. Their death comes quickly, and their life is lamentation.¹⁶

In speaking of so many things which pertain to most men, did he omit to mention that which, as he knew, belongs only to the few? For he speaks of their wisdom, which, he says, is slow. If he had failed to mention this wisdom, his description of the human race, however carefully framed, would have been incomplete. On the other hand, when he commended the excellence of the gods, he affirmed that they excel in that very blessedness which men seek to achieve by means of wisdom. If, therefore, he had wished us to believe that some of the demons are good, he would have included in his description of them something by which we might see that they have some measure of blessedness in common with the gods, or some kind of wisdom in common with men. As it is, however, he has mentioned no good quality of theirs whereby the good may be distinguished from the bad. He certainly abstained from speaking too freely of their malice, in order not to give offence not so much to the demons themselves, as to their worshippers, to whom he was speaking. But he nonetheless indicated to prudent men what their opinion of the demons ought to be. For, in speaking of the gods – all of whom, he wishes us to believe, are good and blessed – he

¹⁵ Cf. Seneca, *Epist.* 7,3,22.

¹⁶ *De deo Socr.*, 13.

entirely dissociates them from the passions and storms, as he puts it, to which the demons are subject: he compares them to the demons only with respect to the immortality of their bodies. He asserts most clearly that, as to the soul, the demons resemble men, not gods, and that this resemblance does not lie in the demons' possessing the good of wisdom, in which men can also share. Rather, it lies in the fact that they too are subject to the storms of passion which dominate stupid and wicked men but which are mastered by wise and good men, who would, indeed, prefer not to experience them at all rather than to overcome them. For if Apuleius had wished us to understand that the demons resemble the gods in the eternality of their souls rather than their bodies, then surely he would not have excluded men from a share in this blessing; for, beyond doubt, as a Platonist, he believes that the souls of men are immortal. Therefore, when he described this race of living beings, he said that men have immortal souls and mortal members. On this account, then, if men do not have eternality in common with the gods because men are mortal in body, then the demons have it precisely because their bodies are immortal.

9 Whether the friendship of the celestial gods can be secured for men by the intercession of the demons

What kind of mediators between men and the gods are these, then, through whom men are to solicit the friendship of the gods? For, in common with men, they are defective in respect of that which is the better part of every living creature, that is, the soul; whereas, in common with the gods, they excel only in that which is the baser part, that is, the body. For a living creature – that is, an animal – consists of soul and body; and, of these two elements, the soul is certainly better than the body. Even when flawed and weak, it is certainly better than even the most healthy and sound body. For the greater excellence of its nature is not brought down to the level of the body even by the taint of vice, just as gold, even when impure, is valued more highly than even the purest silver or lead. Yet these mediators between the gods and men, by whose intervention the divine and the human are to be united, have an eternal body, like the gods, but a flawed soul, like that of men. It looks as

though the religion by which gods and men are to be united through the agency of demons is constituted more by body than by soul.

What wickedness or punishment, then, has suspended these false and deceitful mediators head downwards, so to speak, so that they share the inferior part of a living creature – that is, the body – with superior beings, but the superior part – that is, the soul – with inferior beings? They are united with the celestial gods by the part that serves, but they are united in misery with earthly men by the part that rules. For, as Sallust himself says, the body is the servant: ‘We use the soul to rule, the body to serve.’ He adds: ‘We have the one in common with the gods, and the other with the beasts.’¹⁷ For he was speaking of men, whose bodies are mortal, like those of the beasts. Now these demons, whom the philosophers have provided for us as mediators between ourselves and the gods, may indeed say of the soul and body, ‘We have the one in common with the gods, and the other with the beasts.’ But they are, as I have said, bound and suspended upside down, as it were, having the servant, the body, in common with the blessed gods, and the master, the soul, in common with miserable men: their lower part exalted and their higher part cast down. Hence, if anyone observes that the demons share eternity with the gods because, unlike living creatures on earth, their souls and bodies are not separated by death, we must nonetheless think of those bodies not as the vehicles of eternal triumph, but as the bonds of eternal damnation.

10 That, according to Plotinus, men are less
miserable in their mortal bodies than the demons are
in their eternal ones

Plotinus, of recent memory, is certainly praised as having understood Plato more fully than anyone else.¹⁸ When discussing human souls, he had this to say: ‘The Father in His mercy made for them bonds that are mortal.’¹⁹ Thus, he considered the fact that men have mortal bodies, and are therefore not confined for ever in the misery of this mortal life, to be due to the mercy of God the Father. But

¹⁷ *Catil.*, 1,2.

¹⁸ Cf. Augustine, *Contra academicos*, 3,41.

¹⁹ *Enn.*, 4,3,12.

the iniquity of the demons was judged unworthy of this mercy, and, in addition to the misery of a soul subject to passions, they received a body which is not mortal, as man's is, but eternal. For if they had had a mortal body, like man, and a blessed soul, like the gods, they would have been happier than men. And if, along with a miserable soul, they had at least been worthy to have a mortal body, like men, then they would have been equal to men; for then – if, at any rate, they had achieved some measure of godliness – they would have found rest from woe in death. As it is, however, not only are they no happier than men, but they are more miserable than they, because their bodies are a perpetual prison. For Apuleius did not wish us to understand that the demons may become gods by growing more proficient in the discipline of wisdom and piety: he spoke very clearly of the demons as being demons for all eternity.

11 Of the opinion of the Platonists, who suppose that the souls of men become demons when they leave their bodies

Apuleius, indeed, says that the souls of men are demons, and that, when they depart from men, they become *lares* if they deserve well; *lemures* or *larvae* if ill; and *manes* if it is uncertain whether they deserve well or ill.²⁰ Who does not see, if he gives the matter the slightest attention, what a whirlpool of moral perdition is opened up by this opinion? For no matter how wicked men may be, they will become all the worse if they believe that they are to become *larvae* or *manes*. For since the *larvae* are, as Apuleius says, noxious demons made out of the souls of wicked men, such men will suppose that, after death, they will be invoked with sacrifices and divine honours, so that they may do harm. This, however, is another question. He also says that men who are blessed are called *eudaimones* in Greek, because they are good souls, that is, good *daimones*; and he takes this as confirming his view that the souls of men are indeed demons.

²⁰ *De deo Socr.*, 15.

12 Of the three opposites according to which the
Platonists distinguish between the nature of demons
and that of men

But we are now dealing with those beings whose peculiar nature Apuleius described as being between gods and men: animal in nature, rational in mind, passive in soul, aerial in body, and eternal in time. Having first distinguished between gods and men in terms of both their location and the dignity of their nature, the former being in the highest heaven and the latter below, on earth, he concluded as follows:

You have here two kinds of living creature, gods and men, with the former sharply distinguished from the latter by the sublimity of their location, the everlastingness of their lives, and the perfection of their nature. There is no direct means of communication between the gods and men, for not only are the highest habitations separated from the lowest by a great gulf; also, the life-force of the gods is eternal and unfailing, whereas that of men is fleeting and intermittent. Moreover, the nature of the gods is sublime in its blessedness, whereas that of men is sunk in misery.²¹

I note that he here mentions three opposites belonging to the two extremes of nature: that is, the highest and the lowest. For, after stating the three qualities which are worthy of praise in the gods, he repeats, albeit in different words, the same three qualities in order to match them against three opposite qualities derived from mankind. The three qualities are sublimity of location, everlastingness of life and perfection of nature. These he repeats in different words, in order to contrast them with the three opposite qualities belonging to the human condition. 'Not only are the highest habitations separated from the lowest by a great gulf', he says (for he had spoken of the sublimity of the gods' location); 'also, the life force of the gods is eternal and unfailing, whereas that of men is fleeting and intermittent' (for he had spoken of the everlastingness of the life of the gods). 'Moreover, the nature of the gods is sublime in its blessedness, whereas that of men is sunk in misery' (for he had spoken of the perfection of the nature of the gods). He posits

²¹ *De deo Socr.*, 4.

these three qualities as belonging to the gods, then: sublimity of location, everlastingness, and blessedness; and, as opposed to these, three attributes of men: lowliness of station, mortality, and misery.

13 How can the demons mediate between gods and men, if they have neither blessedness in common with the gods nor misery with men?

Apuleius, then, posits for the demons an intermediate condition between the three pairs of opposing attributes which belong to the gods and to men. There is, therefore, no controversy as to the location of the demons; for that position which lies between the highest and the lowest is most appropriately deemed and called intermediate. The two other opposites remain, however, and we must deal with these with greater care, so that we may either show that they are foreign to the demons, or allocate them to the demons in a way which is consistent with their intermediate position.

We cannot, however, say that they are foreign to them. For although, when we speak of place, we say that the place which is intermediate is neither the highest nor the lowest, we cannot rightly say that the demons are neither blessed nor miserable, like the plants or the beasts which have neither sensation nor reason; for the demons are rational creatures. Because reason is present in their minds, then, the demons must necessarily be either miserable or blessed. Again, we cannot rightly say that the demons are neither mortal nor everlasting; for all living beings either live for ever or end their life in death. Moreover, Apuleius has already said that the demons are eternal in time. What remains, therefore, but the conclusion that these intermediate beings possess the highest extreme of one of the two remaining attributes and the lowest extreme of the other? For if they possessed the highest extreme of both, or the lowest of both, they would not then be intermediate; rather, they would either rise upwards or fall downwards, as the case might be. Since, therefore, as we have demonstrated, they cannot lack either of these two attributes, they will occupy their intermediate place by virtue of receiving one attribute from each extreme. Moreover, since everlasting life cannot be received from the lowest extreme, because it does not exist there, they must

receive this one attribute of theirs from the highest; and, accordingly, there is nothing but misery left for them to receive from the lowest extreme, thereby completing their intermediate position.

According to the Platonists, then, the gods who occupy the highest region have either blessed eternality or eternal blessedness. Men, on the other hand, who occupy the lowest region, have either mortal misery or miserable mortality. But the demons, who occupy an intermediate position, have either miserable eternality or eternal misery. But when Apuleius posited these five factors in his definition of the demons, he did not show, as he had promised he would, that the demons are intermediate. For he said that they have three attributes in common with us: that they are animal in genus, rational in mind, and passive in soul. And he said that they have one in common with the gods: that they are eternal in time. How are they intermediate, then, when they have one of their attributes in common with the highest, but three with the lowest? Who does not see that, to the extent that they are inclined or driven down towards the lowest extreme, they depart from an intermediate position?

Clearly, however, it is even here possible to show that the demons occupy an intermediate position. For they possess one attribute peculiar to themselves, that is, an aerial body, just as those who occupy the highest and the lowest positions also have an attribute peculiar to themselves: the gods an aetherial body, and men an earthly one. And two attributes are common to all: namely, that of being animal in genus, and that of being rational in mind. For Apuleius himself, when he spoke of gods and men, said, 'You have here two animal natures'; and the Platonists never maintain that the gods are anything other than rational in mind. Two attributes remain: that of being passive in soul, and that of being eternal in time; and one of these the demons have in common with the lowest, and the other with the highest, so that they are neither raised up to the highest extreme nor cast down to the lowest, but maintained in their intermediate position by an exact balance. This, however, is the very reason for the eternal misery or miserable eternality of the demons. For he who said that they are 'passive in soul' would have called them 'miserable' had he not feared to offend their worshippers. Moreover, since the world is ruled not by the accidents of fortune,

but by the providence of the supreme God – as even the Platonists themselves admit – the misery of the demons would not be eternal unless their wickedness were great.

If, therefore, those who are blessed are rightly called *eudaimones*, the demons whom the Platonists have placed between men and gods are not *eudaimones*. What room is there, then, for good demons who, above men and below the gods, give aid to the former and service to the latter? For if they are good and eternal, then they are certainly also blessed. If their blessedness is eternal, however, this fact removes their intermediate character; for they are then much closer to the gods and much more separated from men. Hence, the Platonists will labour in vain to show how the good demons, if they are immortal and blessed, can rightly be placed midway between the immortal and blessed gods and mortal and miserable men. For if they have both attributes, namely blessedness and immortality, in common with the gods, but have neither of these in common with men, who are miserable and mortal, are they not remote from men and conjoined with the gods, rather than placed midway between the two?

They would be placed midway between the two if, having two attributes, they held one of them in common with one side and the other with the other, but not both in common with one. For example, man is a kind of mean between beasts and angels. The beast is an irrational and mortal animal, the angel is a rational and immortal one, and man is between them, lower than the angels but higher than the beasts: a rational and mortal animal, having mortality in common with the beasts and reason in common with the angels. Therefore, when we search for a being intermediate between the blessed immortals and miserable mortals, we should look for one which is either mortal and blessed or immortal and miserable.

14 Whether men, though mortal, can be happy in the possession of true blessedness

Whether man can be both blessed and mortal is a great question among men. Some, who take a humbler view of mankind's condition, have denied that he has the capacity for blessedness while he lives a mortal life. Others, however, reject this view and venture to assert that mortals can be made blessed through the achievement

of wisdom.²² If this is so, however, why is it not these same wise men who are appointed as mediators between miserable mortals and the blessed immortals, since they have blessedness in common with the blessed immortals and mortality in common with miserable mortals? For, surely, if they are blessed, they envy no one – for what is more miserable than envy? – and they therefore seek as far as they can to counsel miserable mortals in the pursuit of blessedness, so that, after death, men may achieve immortality also, and so be united with the blessed and immortal angels.

15 Of the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus²³

But if, as is argued much more credibly and probably, all men must necessarily be miserable while they are mortal, then we must seek a Mediator Who is not only man, but also God: Who, by the intervention of His blessed mortality, may lead men out of their mortal misery to a blessed immortality, and Who must neither fail to become mortal nor remain mortal. He was indeed made mortal not by any infirmity of the divinity of the Word, but by His assumption of the infirmity of the flesh. But He did not remain mortal even in that flesh, for He raised it from the dead. For this is indeed the fruit of His mediation: that those for the sake of whose redemption He became the Mediator should no longer remain subject to eternal death even of the flesh. It was, therefore, fitting for the Mediator between us and God to have both transient mortality and everlasting blessedness, so that, in His transient condition, He might resemble those destined to die, and might translate them from their mortality into His everlasting condition.

Good angels, then, cannot be mediators between miserable mortals and blessed immortals, because they too are both blessed and immortal. Wicked angels can mediate, however, because they are immortal like the one, and miserable like the other. But distinct from these is the good Mediator, Who, in contrast to their immortality and misery, chose to be mortal for a time yet had the power to continue blessed in eternity. It is thus that He has vanquished

²² Cf. Seneca, *Epist.* 59, towards the end.

²³ 1 Tim. 2,5.

those proud immortals and noxious wretches by the humility of His death and the bounty of His blessedness, lest by their vaunted immortality they seduce to misery those whose hearts He has cleansed by faith, and whom He has redeemed from their wicked dominion.

As for man, then, mortal and miserable, far removed from the immortal and the blessed: what intermediary is he to choose by which he may be united with immortality and blessedness? The delight that he might think to find in the immortality of the demons is miserable. The mortality of Christ, which might be a stone of stumbling to him, is no longer. In the one case, there is everlasting misery to be feared. In the other, there is no death to be dreaded, for death was not able to endure eternally: rather, eternal blessedness is to be loved. The immortal and miserable mediator interposes himself in order to prevent us from passing to a blessed immortality; for that which impedes our passage, namely misery itself, persists in him. But the mortal and blessed Mediator interposed Himself so that, having passed through mortality, He might make the dead immortal by the power which He showed in His own resurrection, and bestow upon the miserable the blessedness which He Himself had never relinquished.

There is, then, an evil mediator, who separates loved ones, and a good Mediator Who reconciles enemies. But there are many mediators who separate; and this is because the multitude of the blessed are made blessed by their participation in the one God, whereas, because they are deprived of this participation, the wicked angels are miserable. Therefore, they interpose themselves to hinder the achievement of blessedness rather than to help it. They shout us down by their very multitude, so to speak. They prevent us from reaching that one blessed Good to obtain which we need not many mediators, but One: the uncreated Word of God, through Whom all things were made, and by participating in Whom we are blessed.

He is not, however, the Mediator because He is the Word; for, as the Word, supremely immortal and supremely blessed, He is far removed from miserable mortals. Rather, He is the Mediator because He is man; and by His manhood He shows us that, in order to obtain that good which is not only blessed but bliss-bestowing, we need not seek other mediators by whose aid, as we might suppose, we are gradually to strive towards it. We have no such need

because a God Who is blessed and bliss-bestowing has become a sharer in our humanity, and so has furnished us with all that we need to share in His divinity. For, in redeeming us from our mortality and misery, He does not lead us to the immortal and blessed angels so that, by participating in them, we may ourselves also become immortal and blessed. Rather, He leads us to that Trinity by participating in Whom the angels themselves are blessed. Therefore, when He chose to take the form of a servant, lower than the angels,²⁴ so that He might be our Mediator, He remained above the angels in the form of God,²⁵ being Himself both the Way of life on earth,²⁶ and life itself in Heaven.

16 Whether it is reasonable for the Platonists to
define the celestial gods as shunning contact with
earthly things and as refusing to have dealings with
men, who therefore require the help of demons to
secure the friendship of the gods

The statement which the same Platonist ascribes to Plato, then, that 'no god has dealings with men',²⁷ is not correct. The fact that they are not contaminated by any contact with men, is, he says, a particular sign of their sublimity. He admits, therefore, that the demons are contaminated in that way; and it follows that, since they cannot cleanse those by whom they are themselves contaminated, all alike become unclean: the demons by their contact with men, and men by their worship of the demons. Alternatively, if anyone says that the demons can have contact and dealings with men without thereby becoming contaminated, then clearly the demons must be better than the gods; for if the gods were to mingle with men, they would be contaminated. For it is said to be a special virtue of the gods that they are set apart on high, where contact with human beings cannot contaminate them.

Apuleius, indeed, asserts that the supreme God, the Creator of all things, Whom we call the true God, is said by Plato to be the

²⁴ Cf. Phil. 2,7; Heb 2,7; Psalm 8,5.

²⁵ Phil. 2,6.

²⁶ John 14,6.

²⁷ *De deo Sacr.*, 4.

only God Who, because of the paucity of human speech, cannot be comprehended even incompletely in any utterance.²⁸ But Apuleius also says that the knowledge of this God which wise men have, when by the power of their mind they have removed themselves as far as they can from the body, is like the briefest flicker of lightning illuminating the deepest darkness.²⁹ So, then: even though He does so only occasionally, and like the briefest flicker of lightning illuminating the darkness, this supreme God, Who is truly exalted above all things, nonetheless visits with an intelligible and ineffable presence the minds of those wise men who have removed themselves from the body as far as they can. Moreover, He is not contaminated by doing so. Why, then, are the other gods placed so far away in their sublime station, lest they be contaminated by contact with human beings? It is as if we were to say that those aetherial bodies which give to the earth a sufficiency of light should do this without being seen. For if the stars, all of which Apuleius says are visible gods,³⁰ are not contaminated by being seen, then neither are the demons contaminated by the gaze of men, no matter how near at hand they may be when they are seen.

But is it the human voice, and not the sharpness of the eye, which contaminates the gods? Perhaps this is why the demons have their intermediate position: so that they may report the voices of men, from which the gods are so far removed in order that they may remain uncontaminated by them. And what shall I say now of the other senses? For the gods could not be contaminated by smell if they were present; nor could the demons, if they were present, be contaminated by the exhalation of living human bodies, if they are not contaminated by the reek of so many carcasses offered in sacrifice. As for the sense of taste, they are not pressed by the necessity of renewing a mortal body, and so driven by hunger to ask men for food. And touch is within their own power. For although it might seem that we speak of 'contact' specifically where the sense of touch is involved, the gods could, if they wished, mingle with men simply in such a way as to see and be seen, hear and be heard. What need is there, then, of touching? For men would not dare to desire such a thing when they were in any case enjoying the sight or the conver-

²⁸ Cf. Plato, *Tim.*, 28c.

²⁹ *De deo Sacr.*, 3.

³⁰ *De deo Sacr.*, 2.

sation of the gods or of good demons. Also, even if, through great curiosity, they should come to desire it, by what means could anyone touch a god or demon without its consent, when he could not touch even a sparrow unless it were caged?

Let us grant, then, that the gods could mingle with men in bodily form by seeing and being seen, and by speaking and hearing. And if the demons do mingle with men in this way, as I have said, and are not contaminated, while the gods, if they were to mingle, would be contaminated, then the demons are exempt from contamination whereas the gods are liable to contamination. If, on the other hand, the demons are also contaminated, how can they help men to achieve a life of blessedness after death? For if the demons themselves are contaminated, they cannot cleanse men so that, once cleansed, they may be united with the uncontaminated gods between whom and men the demons are appointed as mediators. And if they cannot confer this benefit upon men, of what use is the friendly mediation of the demons? The effect of such mediation would be not that men would pass after death to the gods by the agency of the demons, but that both demons and men would dwell together contaminated, and therefore be excluded from blessedness.

But perhaps someone will say that the demons cleanse those whom they love in the manner of sponges or something of the kind, themselves becoming dirtier in the process of cleansing men, in proportion as the men themselves become cleaner. If this is so, however, then the gods, who shun propinquity or contact with men for fear of being contaminated by them, mingle with demons who are far more contaminated than men are. Or is it that the gods, who cannot cleanse men without contaminating themselves, can without contamination cleanse the demons who have been contaminated by contact with men? Who could believe such things, unless the most deceitful demons had practised their deceit on him?

If being seen and seeing are causes of contamination, what of the gods whom Apuleius calls visible – ‘the most brilliant lights of the world’³¹ – and the other stars that are seen by men? Are the demons, who cannot be seen unless they wish it, therefore safer than they from contamination by men? Or if it is not the being seen which contaminates, but the seeing, then our adversaries must deny that

³¹ *Ibid.*; cf. Virgil, *Georg.*, 1,5f

those 'most brilliant lights of the world' which they believe to be gods see men when their rays extend to the earth. Their rays, however, even though shed over all manner of unclean things, are not themselves contaminated. Would the gods, then, be contaminated if they were to mingle with men, even if, in helping them, it were necessary to touch them? For the rays of the sun and moon touch the earth, yet the earth does not contaminate their light.

17 That in order to obtain the blessed life, which is participation in the supreme good, man has need of a mediator, but of such a kind as Christ alone is, and not of a demon

I wonder greatly at it that such learned men, who declare that all corporeal and sensible things are to be regarded as inferior to incorporeal and intelligible things, should make mention of bodily contact when discussing the blessed life. What has happened to that saying of Plotinus: 'We must fly, therefore, to our beloved fatherland, where dwells both our Father and all else. Where is the ship, then, and how are we to fly? We must become like God'³² If, then, a man grows nearer to God the more he comes to resemble Him, then the only way to be far from God is to be unlike Him; and the soul of man is unlike that incorporeal and immutable and eternal Being in proportion as it longs for temporal and mutable things.

But things below, which are mortal and impure, cannot approach the immortal purity which is above; and so, to remedy this condition of separation from God, a mediator is indeed needed: not, however, the kind of mediator who, though he comes close to the highest in possessing an immortal body, nonetheless resembles the lowest in having a diseased soul. Because of his disease, such a one would be readier to envy our cure than to help us achieve a cure. Rather, we need a Mediator Who is united with us in our lowest estate by bodily mortality, yet Who, by virtue of the immortal righteousness of His spirit, always remains on high: not in terms of temporal location, but because of the excellence of His resemblance to God. Such a one can afford us aid which is truly divine in cleansing and redeeming us. Far be it from the God Who is certainly

³² A paraphrase of *Enn.*, 1,6,8 and 1,2,3.

immune from contamination to fear contamination from the humanity with which He clothed Himself, or from the men among whom He dwelt in human form! For there are two wholesome lessons of no small importance which His incarnation reveals to us at the present time: that true divinity cannot be contaminated by the flesh; and that demons are not to be thought better than ourselves because they do not have flesh. This, then, as Holy Scripture proclaims, is the 'Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.'³³ But of His divinity, in respect of which He is eternally equal to the Father, and of His humanity, whereby He has become like us, this is not the place to speak as fully as I could.

**18 That the deceitful demons, while promising to
conduct men to God by their intercession, strive to
turn them aside from the way of truth**

The misery and malignity of the demons, those false and deceitful mediators, is clearly revealed by the many effects brought about by their own uncleanness of spirit. Nonetheless, by virtue of the distance which separates bodies in space, and by virtue of the lightness of their aerial bodies, they often manage to turn us aside and hinder our spiritual progress. They do not furnish us with a path to God; rather, they prevent us from keeping to the path.

This path is viewed as a corporeal one by the friends of the demons, who arrange the elements like steps between the aetherial gods and earthly men, with the aerial demons in the middle. This is a view which is entirely false and full of error, for righteousness does not progress in this way; for we must rise up to God not by ascending in body, but by coming to resemble Him spiritually, that is, incorporeally. But, even on this view, the gods are thought to possess a special advantage in that, being at so great a distance from us, they are not contaminated by contact with humanity.

Our adversaries believe, then, that the demons are contaminated by men rather than that men are cleansed by the demons, and that the gods themselves would be contaminated if they were not protected by the loftiness of their dwelling-place. Who is so unhappy as to suppose that he can find cleansing on a path where, as our

³³ 1 Tim. 2,5.

adversaries declare, men contaminate, the demons are contaminated, and the gods are liable to be contaminated? Who would not rather choose the path by which we escape the contamination of the demons: by which men are cleansed from contamination by a God Who cannot be contaminated, and admitted to the fellowship of the uncontaminated angels?

19 That even among their own worshippers the
name 'demon' is not now used to signify anything
good

But some of these demon-worshippers, if I may so call them,³⁴ assert that those whom they call demons are called angels by others. Labeo himself is one who says this.³⁵ I see, then, that, if I am not to seem to be disputing merely about words, I must now say something of the good angels. The Platonists do not deny the existence of these, but they prefer to call them good demons rather than angels.

We, however, find in the Scriptures according to which we are Christians that some of the angels are good and some bad; but we have never read of good demons. On the contrary, wherever the term *daemones* or *daemonia* is found in those writings, only malign spirits are signified. Moreover, this custom of speech has been followed by so many people everywhere that even among those who are called pagans, who contend that we should worship many gods and demons, hardly any literate and educated man would venture to say, in praising his slave, 'You have a demon.' For who could doubt that anyone to whom this was said would consider it an intentional curse? What reason compels us, then, to offend the ears of so many people by using a word which almost all men now understand only in a bad sense? For we are then obliged to explain the meaning of what we said, whereas, by using the word 'angel', we might have avoided the offence given by the word 'demon'.

20 Of the kind of knowledge which makes the
demons proud

Nonetheless, the very origin of the name suggests something most worthy of consideration. For the demons are so called from a Greek

³⁴ Cf. *Confess.*, 8,2,4.

³⁵ Cf. Bk II,11.

word which signifies knowledge.³⁶ Now the apostle, speaking in the Holy Spirit, says: 'Knowledge puffeth up, but charity buildeth up.'³⁷ And this cannot rightly be understood as meaning anything other than that knowledge is without profit if it lacks charity. Without charity, it puffs up: that is, it lifts us up with a pride which is only an inflated emptiness.

In the demons, then, there is knowledge without charity. They are so puffed up by it – that is, so proud of it – that they desire to have offered to them, as far as they can induce those upon whom they are able to act to make such offerings, the divine honours and religious service which they know to be due only to the true God. Against this pride of the demons, by which the human race has deservedly been held captive, there stands the great virtue of God made manifest in Christ; but men, who resemble the demons in pride but not in knowledge, and who are puffed up with uncleanness, do not know Him.

21 How far the Lord chose to make Himself known to the demons

The demons themselves, however, knew this same Lord so well, even when He was clothed in the infirmity of the flesh, that they said to Him: 'What have we to do with Thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us before the time?'³⁸ From these words, it is clear that they had great knowledge, but that they had not charity. They feared punishment from Him indeed; but they did not love His righteousness. But He let Himself be known to them only so far as He chose; and He chose to be known only so far as was fitting. He did not make Himself known to them as to the holy angels, who enjoy Him as the Word of God with Whom they are the sharers of eternity. Rather, He made Himself known in such a way as to terrify those from whose tyranny He was about to redeem the predestined of His kingdom and of its glory, ever true and truly eternal.

He did not make Himself known to the demons, therefore, as the Life Eternal, or as that immutable Light which illumines the godly,

³⁶ Cf. Plato, *Cratylus*, 398A.

³⁷ 1 Cor. 8.1.

³⁸ Mark 1,24; Matt. 8,29.

whose hearts are cleansed by faith in Him when they see it. Rather, He made Himself known by certain temporal effects of His power and by signs of His presence which, however deeply hidden, were nonetheless more easily perceived by the angelic senses even of malign spirits than by the infirmity of men. Then, when He judged that such signs should be gradually discontinued, and when He hid Himself more deeply, the prince of demons doubted Him, and tempted Him, to discover whether He was the Christ. This occurred, however, only insofar as He allowed Himself to be tempted, so that He might shape the human form that He bore into an example for our imitation. But after that temptation, when, as the Scripture says,³⁹ He was ministered to by the angels – by the good and holy angels who, as such, must fill unclean spirits with fear and trembling – He made His greatness known to the demons more and more clearly, so that, even though the infirmity of His flesh might seem contemptible, none dared resist His commands.

22 The difference between the knowledge of the holy angels and that of the demons

By the good angels, therefore, all that knowledge of corporeal and temporal things which puffs up the demons is deemed base. It is not that they are ignorant of such things, but that they love the love of God by which they are sanctified. They burn with such a holy love for the beauty of that love, which is not only incorporeal, but also immutable and ineffable, that they hold all things which are beneath it, and all that is not it, in contempt. They do this so that they may, with all the good that is in them, enjoy that Good by which they are made good. Therefore, they know even those temporal and mutable things with greater certainty, because they can perceive the primary causes of such things in the Word of God, by Whom the world was made: the causes by which some things are approved, others condemned, and all things ordained.

The demons, on the other hand, do not contemplate in the wisdom of God these eternal and, as it were, cardinal causes of temporal things. They do, however, foresee many more future events than men do, by reason of their greater knowledge of signs

³⁹ Matt. 4,11.

which are hidden from us. Also, they sometimes announce their own intentions in advance. Finally, the demons often err, but the angels never do so. For it is one thing to infer temporal and mutable events from temporal and mutable causes, and to insert into such things the temporal and mutable influence of one's own will and power: this is to a certain extent permitted to the demons. But it is another thing to foresee how the times will change according to the eternal and immutable laws of God, which are sustained by His wisdom, and to know the will of God, which is the most certain and potent of all causes, by participating in His spirit. This gift has been granted to the holy angels by a righteous discernment. Therefore, they are not only eternal, but blessed also. Moreover, the good by which they are made blessed is the God by Whom they were created. For they enjoy participation in Him and contemplation of Him endlessly.

23 That the name of gods is falsely ascribed to the gods of the nations; whereas the authority of the Divine Scriptures grants it to both holy angels and righteous men

If the Platonists prefer to call the angels gods rather than demons and to number them among those whom their founder and master Plato asserts were created by the supreme God,⁴⁰ let them say this if they wish; for we must not labour over a merely verbal controversy. If they say that these beings are immortal, yet created by the supreme God, and blessed only by cleaving to their Creator and not by their own power, they say what we say, regardless of the name they call them by. And the fact that this is the opinion of the Platonists, whether of all of them or of the better part, can be discovered in their writings. As to the name itself, there is virtually no disagreement between us and them if they call such blessed and immortal creatures gods; for we too read in our own sacred writings: 'The God of gods, the Lord hath spoken';⁴¹ and, again, 'Confess to the God of gods';⁴² and, again, 'He is a great king above all gods.'⁴³ And

⁴⁰ *Tim.*, 41A.

⁴¹ Psalm 50,1.

⁴² Psalm 136,2.

⁴³ Psalm 95,3.

where it is written: 'He is to be feared above all gods', the reason why this is said is shown at once; for the psalmist goes on: 'for all the gods of the nations are demons, but the Lord made the heavens'.⁴⁴ He says, therefore, 'above all gods', but adds 'of the nations': that is, above all those whom the nations take to be gods, but who are demons. 'He is to be feared' by them with that fear in which they cried out to the Lord, 'Hast Thou come to destroy us?'⁴⁵ But where it is said, 'the God of gods', this cannot be understood to mean the God of demons; and far be it from us to say that 'a great King above all gods' means 'a great King above all demons'. The same Scripture also calls men who belong to God's people 'gods': 'I have said, Ye are gods, and all of you children of the Most High.'⁴⁶ We may understand, then, that He Who is called 'God of gods' is the God of these gods; and, when He is called 'a great King above all gods', that He is the great king of these gods.

Suppose, however, that we are asked the following question. If men are called gods because they belong to God's people, to whom God speaks through the agency of angels or of men, are not immortal beings, who already enjoy that blessedness which men seek to attain by worshipping God, much more worthy to be so called? What reply shall we make to this? Only that it is not without reason that, in Holy Scripture, men are called gods more explicitly than are those immortal and blessed beings with whom it is promised that we shall be equal in the resurrection. For, otherwise, the infirmity of our unbelief might, because of their excellence, dare to establish one of those immortal beings as God, whereas it is easy to refrain from so honouring a man. Moreover, it was proper that the men belonging to God's people should be more clearly called gods, in order to make them certain and confident that He Who is called the God of gods is their God. For, even when those immortal and blessed beings who are in heaven are called gods, they are still not called gods of gods: that is, gods of the men who constitute the people of God, to whom it is said, 'I have said, Ye are gods, and all of you the children of the Most High.' Hence what the apostle says: 'Though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, as there be gods many and lords many, but to us there is

⁴⁴ Psalm 96,4f.

⁴⁵ Mark 1,24.

⁴⁶ Psalm 82,6.

but one God, the Father, of Whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things, and we by Him.⁷⁴⁷

We need not, therefore, argue at great length over the name, since the matter itself is so clear that it is free from the smallest doubt. When we say, however, that the angels who are sent to announce the will of God to men belong to the number of the blessed immortals, this does not please the Platonists. For they believe that such service is performed not by those whom they call gods – not, that is, by blessed immortals – but by demons. They do not venture to say that these are blessed, but only immortal; or, if they do call them both immortal and blessed, they regard them only as good demons, and not as gods who dwell on high and remote from human contact. Although this controversy may seem to be a merely verbal one, the name of demon is nonetheless so detestable that we must avoid applying it in any sense to the holy angels.

Let us now, therefore, close this book in the knowledge that, whatever we call these immortal and blessed creatures, they are still only made and created, and they are not intermediaries who lead miserable mortals to immortal blessedness; for they are separated from us by a twofold distinction. On the other hand, those beings who do occupy an intermediate position, having immortality in common with those above, and misery in common with those below, and deserving their misery because of their malice: these cannot confer upon us a blessedness which they do not have themselves, but can only envy us for it. The friends of the demons, then, do not bring forward any worthy reason why we should worship the demons as our helpers rather than shunning them as deceivers. As for those spirits who are good, and therefore not only immortal but blessed: our adversaries suppose that we should call these by the name of gods and worship them with rites and sacrifices in order to secure a blessed life after death. These spirits, however, whatever they may be, and whatever they may be rightly called, desire that religious worship be offered only to the one God by Whom they were created and by participating in Whom they are blessed. With the help of that same God, we shall discuss this more carefully in the following book.

⁷⁷ 1 Cor. 8,5f.

Book x

I That the Platonists themselves assert that only the one God can confer blessedness, whether upon angels or men. We must, however, ask whether the spirits who they believe are to be worshipped for the sake of such blessedness require sacrifices to be offered only to the one God or to themselves also

It is the settled opinion of anyone who is in any way capable of using reason that all men wish to be blessed. But whenever men in their weakness ask who is blessed or what makes them so, they raise a great host of controversies upon which the philosophers have exhausted their efforts and spent their leisure. It would take too long, and it is not here necessary, to review such controversies. For the reader will recall what we said in the eighth book, when choosing those philosophers with whom we might discuss the blessed life which is to come after death.¹ There, we asked whether this is to be achieved by paying divine honours to the one true God Who is the Maker of all gods, or by worshipping many. The reader will not expect us to repeat the same arguments here; and, if he has forgotten them, he can in any case read them again in order to refresh his memory. For we chose the Platonists, who are rightly deemed to be the noblest of all the philosophers, because they are wise enough to perceive that the soul of man, though immortal and rational or intellectual, cannot be blessed other than by participation in the light of that God by Whom both it and the world were made. Also, they assert that that which all men desire – that is, a happy life – cannot be achieved by anyone who does not cling with the purity of a chaste love to that one Supreme Good which is the immutable God.

Even these philosophers, however – whether as a concession to the vanity and error of the people or, as the apostle says, 'becoming vain in their imaginations'² – have supposed, or have allowed others to suppose, that many gods are to be worshipped. Some of them, to whom I have already said not a little by way of reply, have

¹ Ch. 5.

² Rom. 1,21.

believed that the divine honours of worship and sacrifice should be paid even to demons. With God's help, then, we must now examine and discuss the immortal and blessed beings who have their seats in heaven as Dominations, Principalities and Powers:³ those whom the Platonists call gods, and to some of whom they give the name either of good demons or, as we do, of angels. What are we to believe that these beings require of us by way of religion and piety? That is, to speak more plainly: do they wish us to offer worship and sacrifice, and to consecrate some part of our possessions or ourselves, to them, or to their God, Who is also ours?

For it is worship of this kind which is due to divinity, or, if we must speak more expressly, to the Deity. To signify such worship in a single word, I shall insert a Greek term where necessary, for no entirely satisfactory Latin word occurs to me. Indeed, wherever the word *latreia* is found in the Holy Scriptures, our translators have rendered it as 'service'. But the kind of service which is owed to men – service of the kind which the apostle teaches to slaves when he says that they must be subject to their masters⁴ – is customarily designated by another Greek word. *Latreia*, however, is always – or so frequently as to be almost always – used, by those who have written down the divine eloquence for us, to designate that service which pertains to the worship of God. Such worship cannot simply be called *cultus*, for this seems to mean a service which is not due to God alone: we frequently 'cultivate' men also, either their memory or in person. Also, we say that we 'cultivate' not only those things to which we subject ourselves in religious humility, but also certain things which are subject to ourselves. For from the verb 'to worship' [*colere*] we derive 'farmers' [*agricolae*], 'colonists' [*coloni*], and 'inhabitants' [*incoli*]; and the gods themselves are called *caelicolae* for no other reason than that they 'cultivate' the heavens [*caelum colant*]: not, of course, by worshipping them, but by dwelling there, as if they were a kind of celestial colonists. The word 'colonists' is here used not as it is applied to those who are bound by birth to cultivate their native soil under the lordship of its owners, but in the sense in which a great exponent of Latin eloquence says, 'There was an ancient city held by colonists

³ Cf. Coloss. 1,16.

⁴ Eph. 6,5; Coloss. 3,22.

of Tyre.⁵ He called them 'colonists' not because they cultivated the soil, but because they inhabited the city. Hence also, cities founded by peoples hiving off, as it were, from larger cities are called colonies. Thus, while, strictly speaking, the word *cultus* may be used in a specific sense to mean that which is due only to God, it is also used in relation to other things, and so the worship which is due to God cannot be expressed in Latin by the word *cultus* alone.

The word 'religion' might seem to signify more specifically not any worship whatsoever, but the worship of God; and our translators have therefore used this word to render the Greek term *threskeia*. In ordinary Latin speech, however – and not only of the ignorant, but even of the most learned also – we say that *religio* is to be observed in human relationships, affinities and friendships of every kind. The term therefore does not escape ambiguity when used in discussing the worship of the deity; for we cannot strictly speaking say that *religio* means nothing other than the worship of God, since we should then be unjustifiably disregarding the sense in which the word applies to the observance of duties in human relationships.

Again, 'piety', which the Greeks call *eusebeia*, is usually understood in the strict sense to mean the worship of God; yet this word is also used to denote the duties which we owe to parents. Also, in common speech, the word frequently refers to works of mercy; and I suppose that this usage has come about because God especially commands the performance of such works, and declares that He is pleased with them instead of, or in preference to, sacrifices. From this manner of speaking, it has also come about that God Himself is called *pious*.⁶ The Greeks, however, never call Him *eusebes* in their own discourse, although they also commonly use *eusebeia* to mean 'mercy'. In some passages of Scripture, therefore, in order to make the distinction clearer, they have preferred to use not *eusebeia*, which literally means 'good worship', but *theosebeia*, a word coined to indicate 'worship of God'. We, however, cannot express either of these meanings by a single word.

That which in Greek is called *latreia*, then, is called *servitus* in Latin, but it is the service by which we worship God. That which is called *threskeia* in Greek is called *religio* in Latin, but it is the

⁵ Virgil, *Aen.*, 1, 12.

⁶ See, in the Vulgate, 2 Paralip. 30, 9; Eccclus. 2, 13; Judith 7, 20.

religion which binds us to God alone.⁷ What the Greeks call *theosebeia* we cannot express in a single word, but we can call it the worship of God; and we say that this is due to God alone, Who is the true God, and Who makes His worshippers gods. Whoever those immortal and blessed dwellers in heaven may be, therefore, if they do not love us, and if they do not wish us to be blessed, they certainly ought not to be worshipped. But if they do love us and desire our blessedness, then undoubtedly they wish us to receive our blessedness from the same source as they. For how could our blessedness come from one source and theirs from another?

2 The opinion of Plotinus the Platonist concerning illumination from on high

But there is no conflict between ourselves and these more distinguished philosophers over this question. For they saw, and they have in many ways most amply shown in their writings, that these beings derive their blessedness from the same source as we do: from a certain intelligible light cast upon them, which is their God, and which is different from themselves, and which illuminates them so that they are enlightened, and may by their participation in it exist in a state of perfect blessedness.

Expounding Plato, Plotinus asserts, often and strongly, that not even the soul which the Platonists believe to be the soul of the world derives its blessedness from any other source than does our own soul: that is, from the light which is different from it, which created it, and by whose intelligible illumination the soul is intelligibly enlightened. He also develops an analogy between these incorporeal things and the visible and splendid celestial bodies, likening God to the sun and the soul to the moon; for the Platonists suppose that the moon derives its light from the sun. This great Platonist therefore says that the rational soul – or the intellectual soul, we ought rather to say (and he includes in this class all the souls of the blessed immortals who, he has no doubt, occupy dwelling-places in heaven): that the intellectual soul has no nature superior to it except God, Who made the world, and by Whom the soul itself was made. Nor, he says, can these heavenly beings receive a blessed life, and

⁷ See n. 12, below.

the light by which the truth is understood, from any other source than that from which we too receive it. This is in harmony with the Gospel, where we read: 'There was a man sent from God whose name was John; the same came for a witness to bear witness of that Light, that through Him all might believe. He was not the Light, but that he might bear witness of the Light. That was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.'⁸ This distinction sufficiently shows that the rational or intellectual soul, such as John had, cannot be its own light, but shines by its participation in another and true Light. John himself confesses this when, bearing witness to God, he says: 'We have all received of His fullness.'⁹

3 Of the true worship of God, from which the
Platonists deviated when, even though they knew
that God is the Creator of the universe, they
worshipped angels, whether good or bad, with divine
honour

This being so, if the Platonists, or any others of the same opinion, knowing God, had glorified Him as God and given thanks to Him; if they had not become 'vain in their imaginations', sometimes fostering popular error themselves and sometimes not daring to resist it: then they would certainly have confessed that both the blessed immortals and we wretched mortals, if we are to be immortal and blessed, must worship the one God of gods Who is both our God and theirs.

To Him, we owe the service which in Greek is called *latreia*, whether this be expressed through certain sacraments or performed within our own selves. For we are His temple, each of us and every one of us together, since He deigns to dwell both in the whole harmonious body and in each of us singly. He is no greater in all men than in each, for He is neither increased by addition or diminished by division. Our heart is His altar when we lift it up to Him. The priest Who pleads for us is His only-begotten Son. We sacrifice bleeding victims to Him when we strive for His truth even unto

⁸ John 1,6ff.

⁹ John 1,16.

blood.¹⁰ We offer to Him the sweetest incense when we burn in His sight with godly and holy love, and when we devote and render to Him ourselves and His gifts in us. By solemn feasts on appointed days, we consecrate to Him the memory of His benefits, lest, as time rolls by, ungrateful forgetfulness should steal upon us. We offer to Him upon the altar of our hearts the sacrifice of humility and praise, kindled by the fire of love.¹¹ It is so that we may see Him, insofar as He can be seen, and so that we may cling to Him, that we are cleansed of every stain of sin and evil desire, and are consecrated in His name. For He is the fount of our blessedness, and He is the goal of all our desires. In choosing Him – or, rather, in re-choosing Him; for we had lost Him by our neglect: in re-choosing [*reliquentes*] Him, then (and ‘religion’ is also said to be derived from this word),¹² we approach Him through love, so that, when we reach Him, we may rest in Him, blessed because made perfect by the attainment of our end. For our good, concerning the nature of which there has been such great contention among the philosophers, is nothing other than to cling to Him, by Whose incorporeal embrace alone the intellectual soul is, if one may so put it, filled up and impregnated with true virtues.

We are taught to love this good with all our hearts, with all our mind and with all our strength. We ought to be led to this good by those who love us, and we ought to lead those whom we love to it. Thus are fulfilled those two commandments upon which hang all the Law and the prophets: ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy mind and with all thy soul’; and ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’¹³ For in order that a man may know what it is to love himself, an end has been appointed for him to which he is to refer all that he does, so that he may be blessed; for he who loves himself desires nothing else than to be blessed. And this end is attained by drawing near to God. And so, when one who already knows what it is to love himself is commanded to love his neighbour as himself, what else is being commanded than

¹⁰ Cf. Heb. 12,4.

¹¹ Cf. Psalm 116,15.

¹² Augustine here seems to think that ‘religion’ comes from *relegere*, to ‘re-choose’; although in Ch. 1 (pp. 392f), and also at *Retract.*, 1,13,19, he suggests (correctly) that *religio* comes from *religare*, ‘to bind’.

¹³ Matt. 22,37ff.

that he should do all that he can to encourage his neighbour to love God? This is the worship of God; this is true religion; this is right piety; this is the service which is due to God alone.

If any immortal power, then, no matter how great the virtue with which it is endowed, loves us as itself, it must desire that we find our blessedness by submitting ourselves to Him, in submission to Whom it finds its own blessedness. If such a power does not worship God, it is miserable because deprived of God. If, however, it does worship God, it does not desire to be worshipped in place of God. Rather, it confirms and sustains with all the strength of its love that divine decree in which it is written: 'He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed.'¹⁴

4 That sacrifice is due to the one true God

To say nothing at present of the other forms of religious service by which God is worshipped, it is certain, and no man would venture to deny it, that sacrifice is due only to God. Many terms belonging to divine worship are, indeed, wrongly used in showing honour to human beings, whether out of an excessive humility or because of the pestilential practice of flattery. Those to whom such honour is paid, however, are still recognised as being only men: they are said to be worthy of worship and veneration and even, to add still more to their honour, of adoration; but who ever thought of offering sacrifice other than to one whom he knew or supposed or pretended to be a god? Moreover, the antiquity of the practice of worshipping God by sacrifice is sufficiently shown by the two brothers Cain and Abel, of whom God rejected the elder's sacrifice, but looked favourably upon that of the younger.¹⁵

5 Of the sacrifices which God does not require but has desired to be offered as symbols of those things which He does require

But who would be so foolish as to suppose that the things offered to God in sacrifice are necessary to Him for some purposes of His

¹⁴ Exod. 22,20.

¹⁵ Gen. 4,4f.

own? Divine Scripture attests in many places that this is not so; but, in order not to make our discussion too long, let it suffice to cite this short passage from the psalm: 'I have said to the Lord, Thou art my God: for Thou needest not my goodness.'¹⁶ We are to believe, then, that God has no need of cattle, or of any other corruptible and earthly thing, or even of man's goodness, but that everything which is done in rightly worshipping God is of profit not to God, but to man. For no one would say that he intended to help a fountain by drinking from it or a light by seeing by it.

As to the sacrifices of victims taken from their flocks offered by the patriarchs of old: the people of God now read of these, but they do not perform them. We are to understand these things simply as symbols of what we are to do now for the purpose of drawing near to God and helping our neighbour to do the same. A sacrifice as commonly understood, therefore, is the visible sacrament of an invisible sacrifice: that is, it is a sacred symbol. Hence, that penitent in the psalm, or perhaps it is the psalmist himself, seeking forgiveness of God for his sins, says: 'For Thou desirest not sacrifice, else I would give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart the Lord will not despise.'¹⁷ We see how, even as he says that God does not desire sacrifice, the psalmist also shows that God does desire sacrifice. He does not, then, desire the sacrifice of a slaughtered beast; but He does desire the sacrifice of a contrite heart. The sacrifice that the psalmist says that God does not desire, therefore, is a symbol of the one that He does desire. So also, in saying that God does not desire sacrifice, the psalmist means that He does not desire it in the way that foolish people suppose: that is, for His own pleasure. For if He did not want the sacrifice that He does require – and there is only one of these: a contrite heart, humble with the sorrow of penitence – to be symbolised by those sacrifices which He was thought to desire for His own pleasure, then surely He would not have commanded in the old Law that the latter were to be offered. And, in due time, the latter were indeed transformed, so that men should not believe that the sacrifices themselves, rather than the things symbolised by them, were desirable to God or acceptable in

¹⁶ Psalm 16,2.

¹⁷ Psalm 51,18f.

us. Hence, in another passage of a different psalm, God says: 'If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine and the fullness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?'¹⁸ It is as if He should say, Even if such things were necessary to me, I should not ask you for them, for I have them in my own power. Next, the psalmist goes on to show what these words signify: 'Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High: and call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.'

Again, in the words of another prophet,

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?¹⁹

In the words of this prophet, then, these two things are distinguished and sufficiently declared: that God does not require these sacrifices as such, but that He does require the sacrifices which they symbolise. In the Epistle dedicated to the Hebrews, the apostle says, 'To do good and to communicate, forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.'²⁰ And so, where it is written, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice',²¹ nothing else is meant than that one kind of sacrifice is preferred to another; for that which all men call a sacrifice is only a symbol of the true sacrifice. Moreover, mercy is the true sacrifice; and so it is said, as I have just quoted, 'with such sacrifices God is well pleased'. All the divine commandments, therefore, which we read concerning the many kinds of sacrifice offered in the ministry of the tabernacle or the temple, are to be interpreted symbolically, as referring to love of God and neighbour.

¹⁸ Psalm 50, 12f.

¹⁹ Mic. 6, 6f.

²⁰ Heb. 13, 16.

²¹ Hos. 6, 6.

For, as it is written, 'On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.'²²

6 Of the true and perfect sacrifice

A true sacrifice, then, is every work done in order that we may draw near to God in holy fellowship: done, that is, with reference to that supreme good and end in which alone we can be truly blessed. Therefore, even the mercy which we extend to men is not a sacrifice if it is not given for God's sake. For, though performed or offered by man, a sacrifice is a divine thing, as the Latin authors of old showed when they used the word *sacrificium*. Thus, a man who is consecrated in the name of God and pledged to God is himself a sacrifice insofar as he dies to the world so that he may live to God.²³ For this too pertains to mercy: to that mercy which each man shows to himself. And so it is written, 'Have mercy on thy soul by pleasing God.'²⁴ Our body also is a sacrifice when we chasten it by temperance, if we do so, as we ought, for God's sake, so that we may not yield our members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but as instruments of righteousness unto God.²⁵ The apostle exhorts us to this when he says: 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.'²⁶ The body, then, which, because it is inferior, the soul uses as a servant or instrument, is a sacrifice when it is used rightly and with reference to God. And, if this is so, how much more does the soul itself become a sacrifice when it directs itself to God so that, inflamed with the fire of His love, it may receive His beauty and be pleasing to Him, losing the form of worldly desire and being reformed immutably by its submission to Him! This, indeed, the apostle adds in what follows, when he says: 'And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed in the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.'

²² Matt. 22,40.

²³ Cf. Rom. 6,11.

²⁴ Eccles. 30,24.

²⁵ Cf. Rom. 6,16f.

²⁶ Rom. 12,1.

Since, therefore, true sacrifices are works of mercy shown to ourselves or to our neighbours, and done with reference to God; and since works of mercy have no object other than to set us free from misery and thereby make us blessed; and since this cannot be done other than through that good of which it is said, 'It is good for me to be very near to God':²⁷ it surely follows that the whole of the redeemed City – that is, the congregation and fellowship of the saints – is offered to God as a universal sacrifice for us through the great High Priest Who, in His Passion, offered even Himself for us in the form of a servant, so that we might be the body of so great a Head.²⁸ For it was this form that He offered, and in it that He was offered, because it is according to it that He is our Mediator. In this form He is our Priest; in it, He is our sacrifice. Thus, when the apostle has exhorted us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, our reasonable service, and not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed in the renewing of our mind, that we might prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God, that is, the true sacrifice of ourselves, he says:

For I say, through the grace of God which is given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to deal soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For, as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members of one another, having gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us.²⁹

This is the sacrifice of Christians: 'We, being many, are one body in Christ.' And this also, as the faithful know, is the sacrifice which the Church continually celebrates in the sacrament of the altar, by which she demonstrates that she herself is offered in the offering that she makes to God.

²⁷ Psalm 73,28.

²⁸ Phil. 2,7.

²⁹ Rom. 12,3f.

7 That the love which the holy angels have for us is such that they desire us to be worshippers not of themselves, but of the one true God

The blessed and immortal beings who dwell in celestial habitations and rejoice together in their participation in their Creator, firm in His eternity, certain in His truth, holy by His gift, love us miserable mortals and wish us to become immortal and blessed. Rightly, therefore, they do not desire us to sacrifice to themselves, but to Him Whose sacrifice they know themselves to be in common with us. For we and they together are the one City of God, to which it is said in the psalm, 'Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.'³⁰ The pilgrim part of that City, ourselves, is aided by the other part. For from that supernal city where God's intelligible and immutable will is law – from that supernal court, as it were, where the angels confer together for our sakes – there descends to us by the ministry of the angels³¹ that Holy Scripture in which it is written: 'He that sacrificeth unto any god save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed.' This Scripture, this law, these commandments, have been attested by such great miracles that it is clearly apparent to Whom these immortal and blessed beings, who desire us to be what they are, wish us to sacrifice.

8 Of the miracles through which, by the ministry of the angels, God has deigned to confirm His promises in order to strengthen the faith of the godly

I should be thought tedious if I were to recall events too long past and recount all the miracles which were performed thousands of years ago in confirmation of God's promise to Abraham, that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed. But who would not wonder at it that Abraham's barren wife should have brought forth a son at a time of life when not even a fruitful woman could give birth?³² Or, again, that when Abraham sacrificed, a flame from heaven should have passed between the pieces of the victims?³³ Or

³⁰ Psalm 87,3.

³¹ Cf. Gal. 3,19.

³² Gen. 18,10ff; 21,1ff.

³³ Gen. 15,17; cf. Augustine, *Retract.*, 2,69.

that the angels in human form whom Abraham received as guests, and through whom he received God's promise that he was to have offspring, should also have foretold the destruction of Sodom by fire from heaven.³⁴ Or that Abraham's nephew Lot should have been delivered from Sodom by angels just as the fire was descending, while Lot's wife, who looked backwards as she went and was immediately turned into salt, became a sign warning us that no one who has set foot on the path of redemption should yearn for what he has left behind?³⁵

Again, what great miracles were performed by Moses in Egypt in order to rescue the people of God from the yoke of slavery, when the sorcerers of Pharaoh – that is, the king of Egypt who was oppressing that people with his might – were permitted to perform certain marvels only so that they might be vanquished by still greater ones! They did these things by the magical arts and incantations to which the wicked angels – that is, the demons – are devoted; whereas Moses, having on his side as much greater power as he had right, easily overcame them, with the angels as his helpers, in the name of the God Who made heaven and earth. Indeed, the sorcerers failed at the third plague; whereas the ten plagues were brought to completion by Moses in a great display of wonders. The hard hearts of Pharaoh and the Egyptians yielded and they let God's people go. Repenting at once, however, and attempting to overtake the departing Hebrews, who had crossed the sea on dry ground, they were buried and overwhelmed in the waters as they returned.³⁶

And what shall I say of those miracles by which the astonishing exercise of divine power was so often displayed while that same people was being led through the wilderness? What of the waters which could not be drunk but which lost their bitterness and satisfied the thirsty when, at God's command, a piece of wood was cast into them?³⁷ What of the manna which came down from heaven to stay their hunger, but which became rotten with the worms which appeared in it if anyone collected more than the appointed measure; yet, when a double measure was collected on the day before the Sabbath – for it was not lawful to gather it on the Sabbath day – it

³⁴ Gen. 18, *passim*.

³⁵ Gen. 19, 13ff.

³⁶ Exod. 7–14. Cf. Augustine, *Serm* 8; *Enarrat. in Psalm.*, 77, 27.

³⁷ Exod. 15, 23ff.

did not become rotten?³⁸ What of the birds which, when the people longed for meat, and it seemed impossible to satisfy so great a populace, filled the camp and drowned the eagerness of their hunger in the disgust of excess?³⁹ What of the enemies who encountered them and barred their way with arms, and who were laid low without the loss of a single Hebrew when Moses prayed with his arms outstretched in the form of a cross?⁴⁰ What of the treacherous persons who appeared among God's people and who wished to separate themselves from the divinely ordained fellowship, and who were swallowed alive when the earth opened up for them, as a visible token of invisible punishment?⁴¹ What of the rock smitten with the rod, which poured forth waters ample for all that great multitude?⁴² What of the deadly serpents' bites, a most just punishment for sinners, which were healed when a serpent of brass was lifted up on a wooden pole for all to see?⁴³ This was done not only so that the afflicted people might be healed, but also to set before them, by this representation of death crucified, a symbol of the destruction of death by death. It was this serpent which, preserved in memory of this miracle, was later worshipped as an idol by the people when they went astray, but which was then broken in pieces by King Hezekiah who, using his power in the service of God and religion, won great praise for his godliness.⁴⁴

9 Of the unlawful arts employed in the worship of demons, some of which the Platonist Porphyry approves and some of which he seems to condemn

These miracles, and many others of the same kind – though it would take too long to enumerate them all – were performed in order to promote the worship of the one true God and to forbid the worship of the multitude of false gods. Moreover, they were performed through simple faith and pious trust, and not by means

³⁸ Exod. 16,14ff.

³⁹ Num. 11,18ff; 31ff.

⁴⁰ Exod. 17,9ff; cf. Augustine, *Adversus Faustum Manichaeum*, 12,30.

⁴¹ Num. 16,31ff.

⁴² Num. 20,7ff.

⁴³ Num. 21,4ff.

⁴⁴ 2 Kings, 18,4.

of incantations and charms composed by practitioners of the art of wicked curiosity: the art which they call either magic, or by the more detestable name of witchcraft, or by the more honourable one of theurgy. Our adversaries try to distinguish certain persons who are devoted to illicit arts, whom they call sorcerers, and who, they say, practise witchcraft, from others who seem to them worthy of praise because they practise theurgy. In truth, however, both classes are equally bound by the false rites of the demons whom they worship under the names of angels.

For even Porphyry promises a certain kind of purification of the soul by means of theurgy. His argument is, however, developed hesitantly and with shame; for he denies that this art can furnish anyone with a means of returning to God. You may see, indeed, that his opinion vacillates between two alternatives: the crime of sacrilegious curiosity and the profession of philosophy. For on the one hand he warns us to avoid theurgy as false and perilous to those who practise it, and as prohibited by the laws; yet, on the other hand, as if in deference to those who praise it, he declares that it is useful as a means of purifying one part of the soul: not, indeed, the intellectual part, which perceives the truth of intelligible things which have no bodily likenesses, but the spiritual part, whereby we receive the images of corporeal things. This part, he says, is made fit and suitable for the reception of spirits and angels, and for seeing the gods, by certain theurgic consecrations which are called mysteries. He admits, however, that the intellectual soul receives no such purification from these theurgic mysteries as would make it fit to behold its God and to perceive the things that truly exist. And from this admission, it can be inferred what kind of gods they are, and what kind of vision of them it is that he says is produced by theurgic consecrations, if by it one cannot see things that really exist. He says moreover that the rational soul – or, as he prefers to call it, the intellectual soul – can escape into its own realm even though it has never been cleansed by any theurgic art. Also, he says that this art cannot purify the spiritual part to such a degree as will enable it to attain immortality and eternity.

He then distinguishes angels from demons, explaining that the habitation of the demons is in the air whereas that of the angels is in the aether or empyrean. Also, he advises us to make use of the friendship of some demon, by whose help it is possible to rise, even

if only a little way, above the earth after death. He acknowledges, however, that it is by a different way that we are led to fellowship with the angels on high. Moreover, he explicitly asserts, in a sort of confession, that we must beware of any fellowship with demons; for he says that the soul, in expiating after death the guilt that it has incurred, is horrified by the worship of the demons by whom it was ensnared. As to theurgy itself, although he commends it as a means of winning the favour of angels and gods, he cannot deny that it has to do with powers which either themselves envy the soul its purity or serve the arts of those who envy it. He relates the complaint of a certain Chaldean on this subject. 'A good man in Chaldea', he says, 'complains that, though he made great efforts to purify his soul, he was thwarted of success because a man with great power of the same kind, moved by envy, had prayed to the powers and bound them by his conjurations not to accede to his request. Therefore', Porphyry adds, 'what one man had bound, the other could not release'. From this evidence, he concluded that theurgy is a discipline capable of accomplishing not only good, but evil also, among gods and men. He concluded moreover that the gods also suffer, and are disturbed and agitated by the passions which Apuleius attributed to both demons and men, but from which he exempted the gods by reason of the loftiness of their aetherial dwelling. In making this distinction, Porphyry shared the opinion of Plato.

10 Of theurgy, which falsely promises a purification of the soul by the invocation of demons

Behold, then: another Platonist, Porphyry, reputed to be more learned than Apuleius, asserts that through I know not what theurgic art even the gods themselves can be made subject to passions and disturbances; for it was possible, when they were adjured by prayers, for them to be restrained from purifying a soul. They were, he says, so terrified by one who demanded evil of them that another, who asked good of them, could not release them by the same theurgic art to grant the good thing for which he had asked.

Who does not see that all these things are the contrivances of deceitful demons, unless he be their most miserable slave and far removed from the grace of Him Who makes us truly free? For if

the gods in question had been good gods, then surely the well-disposed man who sought to purify his soul would have prevailed with them over the ill-disposed man who sought to impede him. Or, if the gods were just, and deemed the man unworthy of the purification which he sought, they should at any rate not have denied him because terrified by an envious person or, as Porphyry himself says, because hindered by fear of a more powerful divinity, but by the exercise of their own free judgment. It is, moreover, strange that the well-disposed Chaldean who wished to purify his soul by theurgic rites should have found no higher god who could either terrify the frightened gods still further, and so compel them to do good, or allay their fears and so enable them to do good freely. Why did the good theurgist himself lack the means of first purifying from the taint of fear the gods whom he invoked to purify his own soul? Why, if there is there a god who can be summoned to terrify the lower gods, is there not one who can be summoned to purge them from fear? If a god is found who hears the envious man and strikes fear into other gods to prevent them from doing good, why is there not found a god who hears the well-disposed man and takes away the fear of the gods so that they may do good?

What a splendid thing this theurgy is! What a wonderful purification of the soul, where the squalid power of envy is of more avail than the entreaty of pure beneficence! Let us, then, shun and detest the falsehood of such malignant spirits, and give ear to wholesome doctrine. As to those who perform these sordid purifications by sacrilegious rites and who, as Porphyry records, when purified in spirit seem to see certain visions of miraculous beauty, of angels or gods: if they do indeed see anything of the kind, this is what the apostle means when he speaks of Satan transforming himself into an angel of light.⁴⁵ For these phantasms come from him who, longing to ensnare miserable souls by the deceitful rites of the many false gods, and to turn them away from the true worship of the true God by Whom alone they are purified and healed, transforms himself, as was said of Proteus, into every shape.⁴⁶ Whether pursuing us as an enemy or falsely seeming to help, he is in either case harmful to us.

⁴⁵ 2 Cor. 11,14.

⁴⁶ Cf. Virgil, *Georg.*, 4,411.

11 Of Porphyry's letter to Anebo the Egyptian, in which he seeks instruction as to the differences between various kinds of demons

Porphyry showed a greater degree of wisdom when he wrote to Anebo the Egyptian;⁴⁷ for here, acting the part of an inquirer seeking guidance, he exposes and overturns these sacrilegious arts. On this occasion, indeed, he condemns all demons, who, he says, are foolish enough to be attracted by the turbid fumes of sacrifice, and who must therefore dwell not in the aether, but in the air below the moon and on the moon's sphere itself. He does not, however, dare to ascribe to all the demons all the foolish and malicious and absurd practices which properly move him to anger. For, following the practice of others, he calls some of the demons benign, although he confesses that, generally speaking, they are all foolish. Also, he is surprised that the gods are not only enticed by sacrificial victims, but are also compelled by men and constrained to do what they wish. Moreover, if the gods are distinguished from demons by the fact that they are respectively incorporeal and corporeal, he wonders why the sun and moon and other visible heavenly bodies – for he has no doubt that they are corporeal – are considered gods;⁴⁸ and, if they are, why some are called beneficent and others maleficent; and how, since they are corporeal, they are conjoined with the incorporeal gods.

He also asks, as if he were in doubt, whether diviners and those who perform certain wonders are able to do these things because of capacities present within their own souls or by means of spirits of some kind coming from outside themselves. He conjectures that they act by means of spirits coming from without, because it is by using stones and herbs that they cast spells on certain persons, or open closed doors, or perform some other marvel of this sort. This, he says, is why some men believe that there is a class of beings whose special task is to hear prayers: creatures who are by nature deceitful, capable of taking any form, versatile, imitating gods and demons and the souls of the dead; and it is this class of being which performs all those acts which seem to us to be either good or depraved. They do not, however, help us in respect of those

⁴⁷ Cf. Eusebius, *Præp. evang.*, 5,7.

⁴⁸ Cf. Apuleius, *De deo Socr.*, 2.

things which are really good. On the contrary, they do not even know of such things. Rather, they win men over to wickedness, and they often blame and impede those who conscientiously seek after virtue. They are filled with temerity and rashness; they delight in the odour of sacrifices; they are captivated by flattery. Porphyry does not, however, speak of these and other features of this class of deceitful and malign spirits, who enter into the soul from without and delude the human senses both asleep and awake, as things of which he is himself persuaded. Rather, in asserting that these are the opinions of others, he hints at his own suspicion or doubt. It was difficult, forsooth, for so distinguished a philosopher to understand or firmly to refute the whole fellowship of demons, when any little old Christian woman would not hesitate to acknowledge their existence and heartily detest them! Perhaps, however, Porphyry was reluctant to offend Anebo, to whom he was writing, himself a most distinguished exponent of such rites, or the other people who admired such feats as divine works and as pertaining to the worship of the gods.

Porphyry pursues the subject, however, and, still speaking as an enquirer, brings to mind things of a kind that no sober consideration could attribute to any but malign and deceitful powers. He asks why it is that, when spirits of the better sort, as it were, have been invoked, they should be commanded, as though they were of the worse sort, to execute the unjust commandments of men. Why do they refuse to hear the prayers of a man busy at sexual intercourse when they themselves do not hesitate to tempt whomever they like to commit incest and adultery?⁴⁹ Why are their priests required to abstain from animal food lest they be polluted by the reek of carcases, when they themselves are enticed by the fumes of sacrifices and the odours of victims? Why are their votaries forbidden to touch a dead body when so many of their rites are celebrated by means of dead bodies? Why is it that a man addicted to some vice or other should direct threats not to a demon or to the soul of a dead man, but to the sun itself and the moon or some other heavenly bodies, terrifying them with imaginary disaster in order to extort some real favour from them? For he threatens that he will smash the heavens and do other things which are impossible for a

⁴⁹ Cf. Eusebius, *Præp. evang.*, 5,7.

man, expecting that the gods will do what he commands in terror of his false and ridiculous threats, as though they were the stupidest of children.⁵⁰ Porphyry also speaks of a certain Chaeremon, a man learned in these sacred – or, rather, sacrilegious – matters, who wrote that the renowned Egyptian rites which celebrate the deeds of Isis and her husband Osiris have great power to compel the gods to do as they are commanded when he who compels them by his incantations threatens to publish, or, indeed, to abolish, these mysteries. This is especially so where he makes use of the terrible threat of scattering the members of Osiris if the gods neglect to do as he bids them.

Porphyry rightly wonders at it that a man should utter these and other such vain and insane threats to the gods – and not to any gods, but to the celestial gods themselves, who shine with the light of the stars; and that he should do so not without effect, but should thereby compel and move them, by violent power and terrifying threats, to do as he wishes. Or, rather, under the appearance of wondering at it and of seeking the reasons for such things, he gives us to understand that they are done by that class of spirits which he had previously described as if quoting the opinion of others: spirits who deceive, as he puts it, not by nature, but by a fault, and who imitate gods and the souls of the dead. They do not, however, imitate demons, as he says they do; for, in truth, they are demons themselves.

As to Porphyry's view that by means of herbs and stones and animals, and certain kinds of sounds and words and figures and drawings, and even by observing certain movements of the heavenly bodies in the turning heavens, men may create on earth powers capable of bringing about various effects: all such beliefs arise from the tricks which those same demons play on the souls of those who are subject to them, creating delicious entertainment for themselves from the errors of mankind.

It may be that Porphyry's doubts and enquiries were genuine. Even so, merely by mentioning these things he demonstrates, and so places the matter beyond argument, that they are not the work of powers which assist us in the attainment of the blessed life, but pertain rather to deceitful demons. Alternatively, to take a better

⁵⁰ Cf. Iamblichus, *De myst.*, 6,5.

view of the philosopher, perhaps he chose by this means to avoid giving offence to the Egyptian who was devoted to such errors and who believed himself to have some great knowledge. Thus, Porphyry did not proudly assume the authority of a teacher, nor did he distress the Egyptian by opposing him as a declared adversary. Rather, in order to direct the Egyptian's mind to these things, and to demonstrate how contemptible they are, and how they should indeed be shunned, he assumed the character of an enquirer and the humility of one desiring to learn.

Finally, towards the end of his letter, he asks Anebo to teach him what the way of blessedness is according to Egyptian wisdom. As to those who hold converse with the gods and trouble them only for the sake of finding a fugitive slave, or acquiring property, or arranging a marriage, or making a sale or something of the kind: these people, he says, seem to have cultivated wisdom in vain. Moreover, he adds that although these same divine beings with whom they held such converse may have spoken truly in other respects, they have nothing of value or profit to say on the subject of blessedness. They cannot, therefore, be either gods or good demons. Either they are that spirit who is called the Tempter, or merely human inventions.

12 Of the miracles wrought by the true God through the ministry of the holy angels

It is, however, true that things are done by means of theurgic arts which in every way surpass human ability. What remains, then, but for us to believe with prudence that these wonders, which seem to be divinely foretold or accomplished, yet which have no reference to the worship of the true God – in cleaving to Whom, as even the Platonists many times attest, all blessedness is to be found: that these wonders are mockeries and temptations set as traps for us by malign demons, which true piety must shun?

On the other hand, there are certain miracles wrought by God, either through the angels or by some other means, which commend to us the worship and religion of the true God, in Whom alone the blessed life exists. We must truly believe that miracles of this kind are performed either by those who love us according to truth and godliness, or by God working through them. We must not listen to

those who say that the invisible God does not work visible miracles; for even they believe that He made the world. Surely they cannot deny that the world is visible; but whatever marvellous thing is done within this world is certainly less than the whole world – that is, the heaven the earth, and all that is in them; and these things God assuredly made. Just as He Who made the world is hidden from man, however, and is incomprehensible to him, so are the means by which He made it. Although, therefore, the wonders of the visible order of nature are held in low regard because they are always before us, yet, when we view them wisely, we see that they are greater than the least familiar and rarest of miracles. For man himself is a greater miracle than any miracle performed by man.⁵¹

God, then, Who made the visible heaven and earth, does not disdain to perform visible miracles in heaven or on earth. He does this in order to inspire the soul, hitherto given up to things visible, to worship Him, the Invisible. But where and when He does this depends upon an immutable plan belonging to Himself alone, in Whose design all future times have already been created. For He moves temporal things without Himself moving in time; nor does His knowledge of things already done differ from His knowledge of what is yet to be done; nor does He listen in one way to those who call upon Him and see in another those who will call upon Him. For even when His angels hear us, it is He Himself Who hears us in them, being in them as in His true temple not made with hands, just as He is in those men who are his saints. And His commands, though they are performed in time, are comprehended in one glance by His eternal law.

**13 Of the invisible God, Who has often made
Himself visible, not as He truly is, but in a way
which those who saw Him could bear**

Nor should it disturb us that God, though invisible, should often have appeared in visible form to the patriarchs. For just as the sound by which we hear a thought which was first formulated in the silence of the mind is not itself a thought, so the aspect under which God is seen even though He is by nature invisible is not the

⁵¹ Cf. Augustine, *Serm.*, 126,4.

same thing as God Himself. It is, however, He Himself Who is seen under that bodily aspect, just as the thought itself is heard in the sound of the voice; and the patriarchs were not ignorant of the fact that, even though the bodily form was not God, they nonetheless saw the invisible God. For, though Moses spoke with God and was spoken to in return, yet he said: 'If I have found grace in Thy sight, show me Thyself, that I may see and know Thee.'⁵²

Since it was fitting, therefore, that the Law of God should be given not to one man or to a few wise men, but to a whole nation and a great people, by the awesome proclamation of angels,⁵³ the great things which were done on Mount Sinai were done before the whole people. The Law was given by one man there, to the multitude who beheld what was done with fear and trembling. But the people of Israel did not believe in Moses in the way that the Spartans believed in Lycurgus: that is, because he was thought to have received from Jupiter or Apollo the laws which he established. For when the Law by which the Israelites were commanded to worship one God was delivered to the people, marvellous signs and portents appeared before the sight of the people in such number as the divine providence judged sufficient, as the creation served its Creator in giving that same Law.

14 That the one God is to be worshipped not only for the sake of eternal blessings, but also for that of temporal benefits; for all things are subject to the power of His providence

The right education of that part of the human race which consists of the people of God has, like that of a single man, advanced through certain epochs or, as it were, ages, so that it might rise upwards from temporal to eternal things, and from the visible to the invisible. Even during the time when only visible divine rewards were promised, however, the commandment was given that only one God is to be worshipped. This was so that the human mind should not acknowledge any other god than the soul's true Creator and Lord, even for the sake of the earthly advantages of this transi-

⁵² Exod. 33,13.

⁵³ Cf. Acts 7,53; Gal 3,19.

tory life. For whoever denies that all things that either angels or men can bestow upon mankind are in the power of the one Almighty God is a fool.

The Platonist philosopher Plotinus indeed discusses providence.⁵⁴ He infers from the beauty of flowers and leaves that providence extends downward even to these earthly things from the supreme God, to Whom belong intelligible and ineffable beauty; and he holds that all these lowly things which fade away so quickly could not exhibit such an utter perfection of form were they not formed by Him Whose intelligible and immutable form endures in all things together. The Lord Jesus Himself shows this, where He says,

Consider the lilies, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven, how much more shall He clothe you, O ye of little faith?⁵⁵

It was best, therefore, that the human soul, when in its infirmity it was still desiring earthly things, should be accustomed to seek even those lowly and temporal goods which are needful for this transitory life from God alone, even though these things are contemptible in comparison with the eternal blessings of the life hereafter. For by turning to God in its desire even for them, the soul at least does not recede from the worship of that God Whom it reaches only by despising and turning away from such things.

15 Of the ministry of the holy angels, by which they serve the providence of God

As I have said, then, and as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, it has pleased the divine providence to order the course of the ages in such a way that the law enjoining the worship of the one true God was given by the edicts of angels.⁵⁶ The person of God Himself appeared visibly present among men, however: not, indeed, in His own substance, which remains ever invisible to corruptible eyes, but

⁵⁴ *Enn.* 3,2,13.

⁵⁵ *Matt.* 6,28f.

⁵⁶ *Acts* 7,53.

through certain signs exhibited by creation in obedience to its Creator. He also spoke in words of human speech, syllable by syllable, giving to each its brief moment of passing time; but in His own nature He speaks not in a bodily but in a spiritual way: not perceptibly, but intelligibly; not temporally but, so to speak, eternally; neither beginning to speak nor ceasing. His ministers and messengers, who are immortally blessed in the enjoyment of His immutable truth, hear the whole of what He says not with the bodily ear, but with the mind; and, without delay or impediment, they execute, in this visible and perceptible world, the commands which they hear in some ineffable fashion.

Moreover, the Law was given according to the circumstances of the times. Thus, as I have said, promises of earthly rewards came first; but these signified eternal ones. Few understood these eternal blessings, however, though many shared in the celebration of their visible signs. Nonetheless, all the words and things presented in that Law most plainly enjoin the worship of one God: not one of a swarm, but the One Who made heaven and earth and every soul and every spirit which is not what He Himself is. For He made them, and they were made; and they have need of Him by Whom they were created, both for their existence and their wellbeing.

16 As to the promise of a blessed life: are we to put our trust in those angels who require us to pay them divine honours, or in those who teach us to offer religious service to God alone, and not to themselves?

Which angels, then, are we to think trustworthy in the matter of a blessed and eternal life? Those who themselves wish to be worshipped with religious observances, coercing mortals into offering them rites and sacrifices? Or those who say that all such worship is due only to the one God, the Creator of all things, and who teach us to render it with true piety to Him, by the contemplation of Whom they are blessed now, and in Whom they promise that we shall be so in the future? For that vision of God is a vision of such great beauty, and is most worthy of a love so great, that Plotinus

does not hesitate to say that, without it, even he who enjoys all other good things in abundance is wholly unhappy.⁵⁷

Since, therefore, some angels lead us by signs and miracles to worship the one God, whereas others induce us to worship themselves; and since the former forbid us to worship the latter, but the latter dare not forbid us to worship God: in which kind are we to believe? Let the Platonists answer; let philosophers in general answer; let the theurgists [*theurgi*] answer – or, rather, the dabblers [*periurgi*]; for that is a more proper title for all who meddle with such arts. In short, let all men answer, if there still endures in them any part of that natural perception which they possess as rational creatures. Let them answer, I say, and tell us whether we are to sacrifice to those beings, whether they be gods or angels, who command us to sacrifice to themselves, or to that One to whom we are commanded to sacrifice by those who forbid us to worship either themselves or those others.

If neither the one nor the other kind of being performed miracles, but only gave commandments – the one requiring sacrifice to themselves and the other forbidding it, but enjoining sacrifice only to the one God – then piety itself would be enough to discern which of these commandments comes from the stronghold of pride, and which from true religion. And I will say more. If the miracles which stir the souls of human beings had been performed only by those who desire sacrifice for themselves, and if those who forbid this, and command us to sacrifice only to the one God, had never deigned to perform such visible miracles, the authority of the latter would still undoubtedly be preferred, as resting not upon the bodily senses, but upon the reason of the mind. In order to commend to us the oracles of His truth, however, God has, by means of those immortal messengers who proclaim not their own pride, but His majesty, performed miracles of a greater, more certain and more celebrated kind. He has done this so that those among the godly who are weak should not be persuaded to embrace false religion by those who require us to sacrifice to them, and who endeavour to convince us by displaying stupendous wonders to our senses. For is there anyone who loves folly so much that he will not choose the

⁵⁷ *Enn.* 1,6,7.

truth and follow it when he finds it proclaimed by even more miraculous means than falsehood is?

We come next to those miracles which history attributes to the gods of the nations. I do not here speak of those wonders which occur from time to time for hidden reasons having to do with the nature of this world – reasons which are nonetheless appointed and ordained by divine providence: monstrous births of animals, for instance, and strange phenomena in the heavens and on earth, whether merely frightening or actually harmful. These things are falsely believed to be brought about and averted by demonic rites and by the demons' most false art. Here, however, I speak of those wonders which quite clearly are performed by the might and power of demons. For example, it is said that the household gods which Aeneas brought with him when he fled from Troy moved about from place to place;⁵⁸ that Tarquin cut a whetstone with a razor;⁵⁹ that the serpent of Epidaurus attached itself to Aesculapius and accompanied him on his voyage to Rome;⁶⁰ that the ship in which the image of the Phrygian mother stood, and which remained motionless despite all the efforts of men and oxen to move it, was moved by one little woman who, in proof of her chastity, fastened her girdle to it and drew it along;⁶¹ that a Vestal virgin suspected of unchastity removed all doubt when she filled a sieve with water from the Tiber and it did not run out through the holes.⁶² These and similar things are by no means worthy to be compared in might and magnitude with those that we read were performed among the people of God. How much less, then, can we compare those things which were judged worthy to be prohibited and punished even by the laws of those who worshipped such gods: that is, acts of magic or theurgy! Most such things are only empty illusions which deceive the senses of mortal men by playing upon their imagination: as, for example, the drawing down of the moon 'until', as Lucan says, 'from close at hand she scatters dew upon the plants'.⁶³ And if some of these wonders do seem to equal those performed by the pious,

⁵⁸ Valerius Maximus, 1,8,7.

⁵⁹ Livy, 1,36.

⁶⁰ Valerius Maximus, 1,8,2.

⁶¹ Ovid, *Fast.*, 4,305f.

⁶² Valerius Maximus, 8,1,5.

⁶³ Lucan, *Pharsal.*, 6,506; cf. Virgil, *Ecl.*, 8,69.

the two kinds are nonetheless distinguished by their purpose; and this shows that ours are incomparably the more excellent. For acts of magic show only that the many gods of our adversaries are so much the less deserving of sacrificial worship the more they demand it. Our miracles, on the other hand, commend the one God Who, by the testimony of His own Scriptures, and then by the final abolition of those same sacrifices, has demonstrated to us that He has no need of such things.

If, then, there are angels who demand sacrifices for themselves, we must prefer to them those who require sacrifice not for themselves, but for God, the Creator of all things, Whom they serve. In this, they show us how truly they love us; for they wish us, by sacrificing, to submit not to themselves, but to Him through the contemplation of Whom they too are blessed, and to approach Him from Whom they themselves have never departed. Also, if there are angels who desire sacrifice to be offered not to the one God, and not to themselves, but to many gods, whose angels they are, we must, again, prefer to them those angels who belong to the one God of gods. The latter command us to sacrifice to Him, and they forbid the worship of any other god. But none of those other angels forbids the worship of Him Whose angels command that sacrifice is to be offered to Him alone.

Moreover, if, as their pride and falsehood indicate, those other angels are neither good angels nor the angels of good gods, but evil demons who wish to see sacrifice offered not to the one, sole and supreme God, but to themselves, what better defence against them can we choose than the one God Whom the good angels serve: the angels who command us to serve by sacrifice not themselves, but Him Whose sacrifice we ourselves ought to be?

17 Of the Ark of the Covenant and the miraculous signs performed by God in confirmation of the authority of His Law and promise

It was for this reason that the Law of God, given in the edicts of the angels, in which it is commanded that the one God of gods is to be worshipped with religious rites, and by which the worship of all others is forbidden, was placed in the chest called the Ark of the Covenant. This name is sufficient to indicate not that our God,

Who was worshipped in all these rites, was shut up and confined in that place, even though His answers, together with certain signs perceptible to human senses, were given from the place where the Ark was, but that testimonies of His will came forth from it. Also, the Law itself was carved upon tablets of stone and, as I have said, placed in the Ark, which the priests bore with due veneration during the wandering in the wilderness, together with the Tabernacle, likewise called the Tabernacle of the Covenant. Again, there was a sign, which appeared as a cloud by day and which shone like a fire by night. When the cloud moved, the camp was moved; and where it stood, the camp was pitched.⁶⁴

As well as the signs of which I have spoken, and the voices which came forth from the place where the Ark was, other great miracles gave their testimony to the Law. For when the people were entering the Promised Land, as the Ark was carried across the Jordan, the river ceased to flow from upstream, whereas it continued to flow downstream, so that both Ark and people were furnished with dry ground on which to cross.⁶⁵ Then, when it was carried seven times round the first hostile city they encountered, where, after the fashion of the Gentiles, many gods were worshipped, the walls suddenly fell down flat, even though assailed by no hand and smitten by no battering-ram.⁶⁶ Later again, when the people now dwelt in the Promised Land, the Ark was taken captive by their foes because of the people's sins.⁶⁷ Those who had taken it placed it in triumph in the temple of the god whom they worshipped above all others, and left it shut up there. On opening the temple the next day, however, they found the image to which they offered their supplications overthrown and broken and defaced. Then, being themselves alarmed by portents, and still more grievously punished, they restored the Ark of the Divine Covenant to the people from whom they had taken it. And what a restoration it was! They placed the Ark on a cart and harnessed to it cows whose calves they had taken away. They let the cows go in whatever direction they liked, wishing to test the divine power in this way also. Then, without the guidance or direction of any man, the cows steadfastly made their way

⁶⁴ Exod. 13,21; 40,34f.

⁶⁵ Josh. 3,16f.

⁶⁶ Josh. 7,20.

⁶⁷ 1 Sam. 4-6.

to the Hebrews, and, unmoved by the howling of their hungry young, bore that most sacred object back to those who venerated it.

These miracles, and others of the same kind, are small things in the estimation of God; but they are great in their power to terrify and give wholesome instruction to mortals. The philosophers, and the Platonists especially, are more justly to be congratulated on their wisdom than other men, because, as I remarked a little while ago, they have taught that even lowly and terrestrial things are governed by divine providence. They infer this from the testimony of the innumerable kinds of beauty which are to be seen not only in the bodies of animals, but in plants and grasses also. How much more plainly, then, is the presence of divinity attested by those things which happen at the hour foretold, and by which that religion is commended which forbids the offering of sacrifice to any heavenly, earthly or infernal being, and commands that it be offered to the one God alone! He alone blesses us by His love for us and by our love for Him. By assigning a limit to the time during which such sacrifices were to be offered, and by foretelling that they were to be transformed into a better kind by a better Priest, He testified that He has no appetite for these sacrifices, but that He has made use of them to indicate other and greater ones. And He has done these things not so that He Himself may be exalted by such honours, but so that, kindled by the flame of His love for us, we may be moved to worship and cleave to Him, which is a good not for Him, but for us.

18 Against those who deny that the Church's
Scriptures are to be believed in the account which
they give of miracles performed to instruct the
people of God

Will someone say that these miracles are false: that they were not performed, and that the writings in which they are recorded are lies? Anyone who says this, if he asserts that no testimonies of any kind are to be believed in such matters, can by the same token say that there are no gods who concern themselves with the affairs of mortals. For such gods persuaded men to worship them only by performing the marvellous works to which the histories of the heathen testify. In this way, though they brought mankind no ben-

efit, the gods were still able to show their own power; and it is for this reason that we have not undertaken in this work, of which we now have in hand the tenth book, to refute those who either deny that there is any divine power, or who contend that it does not concern itself with human affairs. Rather, we are here dealing with those who prefer their own gods to our God, the Founder of a holy and most glorious City: with those who do not know that He is indeed the invisible and immutable Founder of this visible and mutable world, and the truest bestower of the blessed life which resides not in what He has founded, but in Himself.

For His most true prophet says: 'But it is good for me to draw near to God.'⁶⁸ Among the philosophers, the question is asked, What is the final good, to the achievement of which all our duties are to be referred? The psalmist did not say, It is good for me to have plenty of money, or to wear imperial purple and bear a sceptre and diadem. Nor did he say, as not a few philosophers have said without shame, It is good for me to have bodily pleasure; or, as worthier philosophers have been seen to say, It is good for me to have virtue of soul. Rather, he said: 'It is good for me to draw near to God.' He had learned this from Him to Whom alone sacrifice is due, as the holy angels have shown us by the evidence of miracles; and hence he himself became a sacrifice to God, by Whose intelligible flame he was quickened and kindled, and into Whose ineffable and incorporeal embrace his holy yearning bore him.

Moreover, if those who worship many gods – no matter what kind of gods they consider them to be – believe that the miracles recorded in their civil histories or books of magic (or, to use the term thought more honourable, theurgy) were performed by those gods, what reason have they for refusing to believe in the miracles recorded in our Scriptures? For to these Scriptures is owed a faith as much greater as He is greater to Whom alone they teach us to sacrifice.

19 The reason for offering visible sacrifices to the one true and invisible God, as true religion teaches

Some believe that it is proper to offer visible sacrifices to other gods, but that invisible sacrifices – of which kind are a pure mind

⁶⁸ Psalm 73,28.

and a good will – should, as greater and better, be offered only to the invisible God Who is greater and better than all others. These persons, however, surely do not know that such visible sacrifices are symbols of invisible ones in the way that the words we speak are signs of things. Therefore, just as we direct to God in prayer and praise words that have meaning and thereby offer to Him in our hearts the actual things which the meaning represents, so let us understand that, in sacrificing, we offer visible sacrifice only to Him to Whom, in our hearts, we ought to present ourselves as an invisible sacrifice. It is when we do this that the angels, and all those higher powers who are mighty by virtue of their goodness and piety, look with favour on us, and rejoice in us, and assist us with their strength. If we desire to exhibit such worship to them, however, they are not willing to receive it; and, when they are sent out to men and become visible to the senses, they most expressly forbid it. There are examples of this in Holy Scripture: some have supposed that they should, by adoration or sacrifice, offer to angels the same honour as is due to God, and have been forbidden to do this by the admonition of the angels themselves, and commanded to offer it to Him alone to Whom the angels know that it can be paid without sin.⁶⁹

Also, the holy angels have in this respect been imitated by holy men of God. For Paul and Barnabas were thought to be gods when they performed a miracle of healing in Lycaonia, and the Lycaonians wished to sacrifice victims to them; but they in humble piety declined such an honour, and preached to them the God in Whom they should believe.⁷⁰

Again, those deceitful and proud spirits who demand such sacrifice for themselves do so for no other reason than that they know it to be due to the true God. For what they truly rejoice in is not, as Porphyry says, and as many others suppose, the odour of corpses, but divine honours. After all, they have plenty of odours on all sides, and could provide themselves with more if they wished to have more. But the spirits who arrogate divinity to themselves delight not in the smoke of carcasses, but in deceiving and subjecting to themselves the soul of the suppliant whom they hinder from

⁶⁹ Judg. 13,16; Rev. 22,8f.

⁷⁰ Acts 14,7ff.

drawing near to the true God, preventing him from offering himself as a sacrifice to God by inducing him to sacrifice to other gods.

20 Of the supreme and true sacrifice effected by the Mediator between God and man

Hence, the true Mediator, the man Jesus Christ, became the Mediator between God and man by taking the form of a servant.⁷¹ In the form of God, He receives sacrifice together with the Father, with Whom He is one God. In the form of a servant, however, He chose to be a sacrifice Himself, rather than to receive it, so that not even in this case might anyone have reason to think that sacrifice is to be offered to a creature, no matter of what kind. Thus, He is both the priest who offers and the sacrifice which is offered;⁷² and He intended that there should be a daily sign of this in the sacrament of the Church's sacrifice. For the Church, being the body of which He is the Head, is taught to offer herself through Him. The sacrifices of the holy men of old were the many and various signs of this true sacrifice, which was in this way prefigured in many things, just as one thing may be expressed in many different words, in order to commend it frequently but without tedium. To this supreme and true sacrifice all false sacrifices have yielded.

21 Of the measure of power given to the demons for the glorification of the saints through their endurance of suffering; for the saints have triumphed not by placating the spirits of the air, but by abiding in God

At certain appointed and foreordained times, indeed, power has been granted to the demons, so that they may incite the men whom they possess to give vent to their enmity against the City of God. Such tyrannical demons do not only receive sacrifice from those who offer it willingly, but also extort it by violent persecution from the unwilling. Their power is, however, found to be not merely harmless to the Church, but even useful to her; for it completes the

⁷¹ Cf. Phil. 2,6f; 1 Tim. 2,5

⁷² Cf. Heb. 10,11ff.

number of the martyrs, whom the City of God esteems all the more highly, as illustrious and honoured citizens, because they have striven even to blood against the sin of ungodliness.⁷³ If the customary language of the Church allowed it, we might more elegantly call these men our heroes. This word is said to be derived from Juno, who is called Hera in Greek, and hence, according to the fables of the Greeks, one or other of her sons was called Heros. The hidden significance of this fable lies in the fact that the air [*aer*] is said to be the province of Juno, and there, so they say, the heroes and the demons dwell together: 'heroes' here meaning the souls of the meritorious dead.⁷⁴ But we would call our martyrs heroes for a quite different reason (if, as I said, ecclesiastical language admitted this usage): not because they dwell in fellowship with the demons in the air, but because they have vanquished those demons – that is, those powers of the air⁷⁵ – including Juno herself, whatever she may be thought to be.

For it is by no means unfitting that the poets should portray Juno as inimical to virtue and envious of the courageous men whose goal is Heaven. Once again, however, Virgil unfortunately succumbs and surrenders to her. For although he at one point represents her as saying, 'I am conquered by Aeneas',⁷⁶ Helenus admonishes Aeneas himself, as with religious counsel, when he says: 'Gladly intone your prayers to Juno, and conquer that mighty queen with suppliant gifts.'⁷⁷ Following this opinion, Porphyry – although he is here expressing other people's views rather than his own – says that a good god or genius does not come to a man unless an evil one has first been placated. This implies that evil deities are stronger than good ones; for the good deities are prevented from helping us until the evil ones have been placated and have yielded place, whereas the evil deities can do us harm without the good being able to stop them. This is not the way of the true and truly holy religion. It is not in this way that our martyrs conquer Juno – that is, the powers of the air who envy the virtues of the godly. Our heroes, if usage

⁷³ Cf. Heb. 12,4.

⁷⁴ Augustine's apparent belief that there is some etymological connection between *aer* and Hera is incorrect.

⁷⁵ Cf. Eph. 2,2.

⁷⁶ *Aen.*, 7,310.

⁷⁷ *Aen.*, 3,438f.

permitted us to call them that, overcome Hera not with suppliant gifts, but with divine virtues. Surely Scipio bears the surname Africanus because he conquered Africa with his valour, not because he won the enemy's mercy by placating them with gifts.

22 Whence comes the power of the saints against the demons; and whence comes true cleansing of the heart

It is by true godliness that men of God cast out the power of the air which is the enemy and adversary of godliness: not by placating it, but by exorcising it. They overcome all the temptations of their enemy not by praying to him, but by praying to their own God against him. For the enemy cannot conquer or subdue any but those who are in league with sin. Therefore, the enemy is conquered in the name of Him Who took human form and lived without sin, so that He Himself, as both priest and sacrifice – that is, as the Mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ, through Whom we are cleansed of sin and reconciled to God – might bring about the remission of sins. For men are separated from God only by sins, from which we are cleansed in this life not by our own virtue, but by the divine compassion: not by our own power, but by His favour; for whatever virtue we call our own, no matter how small, is bestowed upon us by His goodness. We might, indeed, attribute too much merit to ourselves while in the flesh, were it not for the fact that we live subject to His pardon until we lay flesh aside. This is the reason why grace has been bestowed upon us through a Mediator, so that we who are defiled by sinful flesh might be cleansed 'by the likeness of sinful flesh'.⁷⁸ By this grace of God, through which He has shown us His great mercy, we are guided by faith in this life and, after this life, we shall be led onwards by it towards the greatest fullness of perfection by the Vision of immutable truth.

23 Of the *principia* upon which the Platonists teach that the purification of the soul depends

Even Porphyry says that divine oracles have declared that we are not cleansed by offering sacrifice to the sun and moon, and that this

⁷⁸ Rom. 8,3.

shows that a man cannot be purified by sacrificing to any gods. For what rites can cleanse us, if those of the sun and moon, which are held to be the foremost of the gods of heaven, do not cleanse? Next, he says that what the oracles means is that the *principia* are able to cleanse us. He says this so that no one shall suppose, when he declares that sacrificing to the sun and moon cannot cleanse us, that sacrificing to some other member of the host of gods might suffice to do so. And we know what he, as a Platonist, means by the *principia*.⁷⁹ For he here refers to God the Father and God the Son, Whom he calls in Greek the intellect or mind of the Father. Of the Holy Spirit, however, he says nothing, or nothing clearly; for I do not understand what he means when he speaks of some other being holding an intermediate place between these two. For if, like Plotinus, when the latter is discussing the three principal substances, Porphyry had wished us to understand this third as being the soul of nature, he surely would not have given it a place intermediate between these two: that is, between the Father and the Son. For Plotinus places the soul of nature after the intellect of the Father,⁸⁰ whereas Porphyry, when he says that it is intermediate, does not place it after the others, but between them. No doubt he spoke as he was able or as he wished. We, however, say that the Holy Spirit is the spirit not of the Father only, nor of the Son only, but of both. For the philosophers use words in whatever way they like, and they do not bother to avoid offending the ears of religious men even in the most difficult matters. But we are obliged by religious duty to speak according to a fixed rule, lest verbal licence beget impious opinions concerning the matters which our words signify.

24 Of the one and true *principium* which alone cleanses and renews human nature

When we speak of God, therefore, we do not say that there are two or three *principia*; nor are we at liberty to say that there are two or three gods. Speaking of each – of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – we confess that each individually is God; but we do not say, as the heretical followers of Sabellius say, that the Father is the same as the Son, and that the Holy Spirit is the same as the Father

⁷⁹ Cf. Plotinus, *Enn.*, 45,1; Cyril of Alexandria, *Contra Jul.*, 8.

⁸⁰ *Enn.*, 45,6.

and the Son. Rather, we say that the Father is the Father of the Son, and that the Son is the Son of the Father, and that the Holy Spirit is the spirit of both the Father and the Son, but is neither Father nor Son. It was, then, truly said that only by a *principium* can a man be cleansed; but the Platonists are incorrect in speaking of *principia* in the plural.

Porphyry, however, was in subjection to envious powers. He was ashamed of them, but he was too much in awe of them to speak freely against them. And so he refused to understand that the Lord Christ is the *Principium* by Whose incarnation we are cleansed. Indeed, Porphyry held Him in contempt because of the flesh He took in order to become a sacrifice for our cleansing. It was because of his pride that Porphyry did not understand this great mystery: the pride which our true and gracious Redeemer brought low by His own humility when He revealed Himself to mortal men clothed in the mortality which He assumed. Malign and deceitful mediators congratulate themselves on not having this mortality and, speaking as immortals, promise false help to miserable men.

Thus, the good and true Mediator showed that it is sin which is evil, and not the substance or nature of flesh. He showed that a body of flesh and a human soul could be assumed and retained without sin, and laid aside at death, and changed into something better by resurrection. He showed also that death itself, though it is the penalty of sin – a penalty which He paid for us without sin – is not something that we are to avoid by sinful means. Rather, if need be, we should suffer death in the name of righteousness. For He was able to redeem us from sin by His own death, because He died, but He died for no sin of His own.

But Porphyry the Platonist did not recognise Him as the *Principium*; otherwise, he would have recognised Him as the one Who cleanses us. For it is not flesh which is the *principium*, and not the human soul, but the Word, through Whom all things were made.⁸¹ Thus, it is not flesh as such which cleanses us. What cleanses us is the Word that clothed itself in flesh when ‘the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us’.⁸² For when, speaking in parables, Christ spoke of eating His flesh, and those who did not understand Him

⁸¹ John 1,3.

⁸² John 1,14.

were offended, and went away saying, 'This is an hard saying, who can hear it?', He answered those who remained: 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.'⁸³

The *Principium*, then, having assumed soul and flesh, purifies both the soul and flesh of those who believe in Him. When the Jews asked Him who He was, therefore, He replied that He was 'the *Principium*'.⁸⁴ And we, carnal, infirm, guilty of sin, and wrapped in the darkness of ignorance, would be wholly unable to perceive this *Principium* unless we were cleansed and healed by Him, both by means of what we were, and of what we were not. For we were men, but we were not righteous; yet in His incarnation He assumed human nature, but it was righteous and not sinful. This is the mediation by which a hand is stretched out to the fallen and helpless; this is the seed 'ordained by the angels' by whose disposition was given the law which commands us to worship the one God, and which promises the coming of the Mediator.

25 That all the saints who lived at the time of the Law and in earlier ages were justified by faith in the mystery of Christ's incarnation

It was by their faith in this mystery that the men of old were able to attain purity by living righteously. This was so even before the Law was given to the Hebrew people; for even then they did not lack a teacher, because they had both God and the angels. And it was also true during the time of the Law, even though, when the Law gave its promises of spiritual things in figurative language, it seemed to promise fleshly things (and is now for this reason called the Old Testament). For there were then prophets by whom the same promise was proclaimed as had been proclaimed by the angels; and among the number of those prophets was he whose great and divine utterance concerning the end and good of human life I quoted a little while ago: 'It is good for me to draw near to God.'

⁸³ John 6,57; 61; 64

⁸⁴ John 8,25, although only the text of the Vulgate lends itself to this understanding. The Greek text is ambiguous, but the English translation of the Authorised Version is probably the correct rendering of John 8,25: 'Then said they unto Him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.'

Surely in this psalm the distinction between the two Testaments which are called Old and New is made sufficiently clear.⁸⁵ For the psalmist says that when he saw in what abundance fleshly and earthly promises were enjoyed by the ungodly, his feet were almost gone and his steps had well nigh slipped. It was as if he had served God in vain; for he perceived that those who despised God increased in that very prosperity which he sought at God's hand. He says also that, desiring to know why this was so, he laboured in vain to understand it until he went into the sanctuary of God; then, however, he understood the end of those whom he had wrongly thought happy. Then, as he says, he understood that they had been cast down by that very thing in which they had exalted themselves, and that they had been consumed for their iniquities and had perished, and that the whole summit of temporal happiness had become for them like a dream from which the dreamer wakes and suddenly finds himself destitute of all the joys that he had imagined as he slept. And because they had seemed to themselves to be great men on this earth or in this earthly city, he says: 'O Lord, in Thy city Thou wilt reduce their image to nothing.'

He sufficiently shows, however, of what benefit it had been to him to seek even earthly goods from the one true God alone, in Whose power are all things; for he says: 'As a beast was I before thee, and I am always with Thee.' When he says, 'As a beast', he means,

I was without understanding; for I ought to have desired of Thee such things as the ungodly cannot share with me, and not those things by reason of which, when I saw the ungodly possessing them in abundance, I supposed that I was serving Thee in vain because those who refused to serve Thee had what I had not. Nonetheless, I am always with Thee, for even in my desire for such things, I did not seek them from other gods.

And so he goes on: 'Thou hast holden me by my right hand, and by Thy counsel Thou hast guided me, and with glory hast Thou taken me up.' He concludes that no earthly goods are propitious, even though he had faltered when he saw the ungodly possessing such goods in abundance. 'For what', he says, 'have I in Heaven, and what have I desired from Thee upon earth?' He reproaches

⁸⁵ Psalm 73,17ff.

himself, and he is justly displeased with himself; for, though he had in Heaven so great a good (as he afterwards understood), he yet sought from his God on earth a transitory and fragile happiness, made, so to speak, of clay. 'My heart and my flesh fail', he says, 'O God of my heart'. But a good failure, leading from things below to things above! Hence in another psalm it is said: 'My soul longeth, yea, even faileth, for the courts of the Lord.'⁸⁶ And, in yet another psalm, 'My soul fainteth for Thy salvation.'⁸⁷ Yet, though he said that both his heart and his flesh were failing, he did not say, O God of my heart and flesh, but, O God of my heart; for it is by the heart that the flesh is made clean. And so the Lord says: 'Cleanse that which is within, and the outside shall be clean also.'⁸⁸

The psalmist then says that God Himself is his portion: not something from God, but God Himself. 'The God of my heart, and my portion for ever.' Out of all the things which can be chosen by men, it has pleased him to choose God Himself. 'For lo', he says, 'they that are far from Thee shall perish; Thou destroyest all them that go a-whoring from thee': that is, who prostitute themselves to many gods. Then follow the words for which all the other verses of the same psalm seem to prepare: 'It is good for me to draw near to God' – not to go far away; not to go whoring after many gods. And this drawing near to God will be perfected when all that is to be redeemed in us has been redeemed.

But for the time being, we must, as he says, place our hope in God. 'For that which is seen', says the apostle, 'is not hope. For what a man sees, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.'⁸⁹ Being, then, for the present established in this hope, let us do what the psalmist says in the following verse and be angels or messengers of God after our fashion, declaring His will and praising His glory and His grace. For when he had said, 'To place my hope in God', he goes on, 'that I may declare all Thy praises in the gates of the daughter of Sion'.⁹⁰ This is the most glorious City of God; this is the city which knows and worships the one God. She is proclaimed by the holy angels,

⁸⁶ Psalm 84,3.

⁸⁷ Psalm 119,81.

⁸⁸ Matt. 23,26.

⁸⁹ Rom. 8,24f.

⁹⁰ Psalm 73,26f.

who invite us into their fellowship and desire us to become fellow-citizens of her with them. For they do not wish us to worship them as our gods, but to worship their God and ours with them; nor to sacrifice to them, but to become a sacrifice to God with them.

Thus, whoever will lay malignant obstinacy aside and consider these things will have no doubt that all those blessed and immortal spirits who do not envy us (for if they envied us they would not be blessed), but rather love us, and desire us to be blessed with them, show us more favour, and help us more readily, when we worship the one God with them, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, than if we were to worship them by offering sacrifice to them.

26 Of the inconstancy of Porphyry in vacillating between the confession of the true God and the worship of demons

I do not know how this is so, but it seems to me that Porphyry blushed for his friends the theurgists. For he already knew everything that I have said, but still he did not feel free to speak out against the worship of many gods. He even said, indeed, that there are some angels who come down to men here below and reveal divine truths to theurgists, and that there are others who declare on earth the things that belong to the Father, His height and depth.⁹¹ But are we to believe that the angels whose ministry it is to declare the will of the Father wish us to be subject to any but Him Whose will they announce to us? Even this Platonist, then, rightly admonishes us to imitate rather than invoke them. We therefore ought not to be afraid of offending those immortal and blessed subjects of the one God by not sacrificing to them. For they know that such sacrifice is due only to the one true God, by cleaving to Whom they are blessed. Beyond doubt, therefore, they do not wish to have offered to them either the symbolic sacrifice itself or the true sacrifice which the symbolic sacrifice signifies. Such arrogance belongs to proud and miserable demons, and is far different from the piety of those who are subject to God, and whose blessedness comes only from cleaving to Him. That we also may receive this good, they deem it proper to favour us with sincere kindness, and they arrogate to

⁹¹ Cf. Eusebius, *Praep. evang.*, 4,7ff.

themselves no lordship over us; rather, they proclaim to us Him under Whose rule we will be their fellow-citizens in peace.

Why, then, O philosopher, do you still tremble to lift up your voice with freedom against the powers which are inimical both to true virtue and to the gifts of the true God? You have already distinguished the angels who proclaim God's will from those angels who, drawn by I know not what art, come down to visit theurgists. Why do you still honour the latter by saying that they declare divine truth? If they do not proclaim the Father's will, what divine truths can they declare? These spirits, indeed, were so effectively restrained by the incantations of an envious man that they could not grant purity of soul to another, and, as you say, could not be released from those bonds by a good man desiring to be cleansed, and recover power over their own deeds. Do you still doubt that these are malignant demons; or do you, perhaps, pretend not to know that they are, for fear of offending the theurgists from whom, lured by curiosity, you have learned these pernicious and insane things as though they were some great blessing? Do you dare to elevate these envious spirits – more properly called pests than powers – up through the air even to heaven? As you yourself confess, they are more worthy to be called the slaves of envy than lords. Are you not therefore ashamed to place them among your starry gods, and so insult even the stars themselves?

27 Of the impiety of Porphyry, which transcends even the error of Apuleius

The error of your Platonist colleague Apuleius was more human and more tolerable. He confesses – even though he does not wish to do so, for he holds them in honour – that the demons who occupy the region below the moon suffer storms of passion and disturbances of the mind.⁹² But as to the higher and celestial gods, who occupy the ethereal regions – whether visible, like the sun, the moon and the other heavenly bodies whose brightness makes them conspicuous, or invisible but believed in by him: he argues as strongly as he can that these are exempt from the blemish of any such disturbance.

⁹² Cf. Bk ix,3; *De deo Socr.*, 12.

It is not, then, from Plato, but from Chaldean masters that you have learned to elevate human failings up to the ethereal and empyrean heights of the universe, so that theurgists might be able to obtain divine revelations from your gods. You raise yourself above these divine revelations by the intellectual character of your life, which, it seems, has no need of the cleansings effected by the theurgic arts; for these are not at all necessary to the philosopher. Because you wish to reward your teachers, however, you recommend such arts to others, who, not being philosophers, are seduced into using what you admit is useless to yourself, who are capable of higher things. Thus, those who are remote from the power of philosophy, which is too arduous for all save the few, may, with your encouragement, seek purification at the hands of the theurgists: purification not, indeed, of the intellectual, but of the spiritual part of the soul. Now since those incapable of philosophy form incomparably the greater part of the multitude of mankind, more may be compelled to resort to these secret and illicit teachers of yours than to the Platonic schools. For these most impure demons, pretending to be ethereal gods, whose herald and messenger you have become, have promised that those who are cleansed by the art of theurgy in the spiritual part of their soul shall not, indeed, return to the Father, but shall dwell above the aerial regions among the ethereal gods.

But such promises are not heeded by the multitude of men for whose sake Christ came, to set them free from the lordship of demons. For in Him they have a most merciful cleansing of mind, body and spirit alike. For, in order that He might heal the whole man from the plague of sin, He took without sin the whole of human nature. If only you had known Him; if only you had entrusted yourself to Him for healing, rather than to your own virtue which, being human, is fragile and infirm, or to most pernicious curiosity! He would not have deceived you; for, as you yourself have written, your own oracles have confessed Him to be holy and immortal. And the most noble of poets has said of Him (poetically, indeed, for it was another's portrait that he sketched; but the words are true if you refer them to Christ): 'With you as our guide, if any vestiges of our crimes remain, they shall be obliterated, and the earth released from its perpetual fear.'⁹³ By this, he

⁹³ Virgil, *Ecl.*, 4, 13f.

shows that, because of the infirmity of this life, there may linger, even in those who are making great progress in the virtue of righteousness, not crimes, perhaps, but the vestiges of crimes; and that these can be healed only by that Saviour of Whom this verse speaks. For, in about the fourth line of the same Eclogue, Virgil himself indicates that this verse was not simply his own invention, when he says: 'The final age foretold in Cumae's song has come.' From this, it appears beyond question that the verse was dictated by the Cumaean Sibyl.

But those theurgists, or, rather, the demons who assume the appearance and form of gods, defile rather than purify the human spirit by false appearances and the deceiving mockery of empty forms. For how can those who themselves have an unclean spirit cleanse the spirit of man? If they were not unclean, they certainly could not be bound by the incantations of an envious man, and they would be neither afraid nor, like that man, too envious to bestow the empty blessing which they promise. But it is enough that you admit that the intellectual soul – that is, our mind – cannot be cleansed by theurgy; and that even the spiritual or inferior part of our soul cannot be made immortal and eternal by such art, even though you do assert that it can be cleansed by it. Christ, however, promises eternal life; and therefore, to your anger, amazement and confusion, the world flocks to Him.

You cannot not deny that men err when they entrust themselves to the discipline of theurgy, which deceives so many by its blind and foolish teaching. Nor can you deny that it is most certainly a mistake to have recourse by deed and supplication to principalities and angels. But what is the point of this when, at the same time, as if to avoid seeming to have wasted your efforts in learning such arts, you send men to the theurgists so that those who do not live under the guidance of the intellectual soul may have their spiritual souls purified by them?

28 The arguments which so blinded Porphyry that
he was not able to recognise the true wisdom which
is Christ

You direct men, therefore, into most certain error; and you are not ashamed of doing so much harm, even though you profess to be a lover of virtue and wisdom. But if you truly loved these things, you

would have recognised 'Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God',⁹⁴ instead of backsliding from His wholesome humility because puffed up with the pride of empty knowledge.

You confess, however, that even the spiritual part of the soul can be cleansed by the virtue of chastity without the aid of those theurgic arts and mysteries which you wasted so much effort in learning. Sometimes you even say that these mysteries do not raise the soul after death, so that, after the end of this life, they seem to be of no profit even to that part of the soul which you call spiritual. Yet you return to the subject of the theurgic arts in many places and repeatedly, for no other purpose, as far as I can see, than to seem an accomplished practitioner of them, and to please those who are curious in illicit arts, or to arouse the same curiosity in others. But you did well to say that this art is to be feared, both because of the legal peril involved in its practice⁹⁵ and by reason of its very action. If only those unfortunate people who practise it would hear what you say, and shrink from their fascination with it, or never come near it at all!

You say, indeed, that ignorance and the many vices which arise from it cannot be cleansed by any mysteries, but only by *patrikos nous*, that is, the mind or intellect of the Father, which is conscious of the Father's will. But you do not believe that this mind is Christ; for you despise Him because of the body that He received from a woman, and because of the shame of the Cross. Your exalted wisdom rejects such lowly and abject things, and looks to higher regions. But He fulfils what the holy prophets truly foretold of Him: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to naught the prudence of the prudent.'⁹⁶ He does not, however, destroy and bring to naught His own gift in them, but only what they arrogate to themselves, and do not attribute to Him. Hence the apostle, having cited this testimony of the prophet, goes on:

Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of

⁹⁴ 1 Cor. 1,24.

⁹⁵ Cf. Bk VII,35.

⁹⁶ Is. 29,14; 1 Cor. 1,19.

preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.⁹⁷

This is what our adversaries despise as weak and foolish, as if they were wise and strong in themselves. Yet this is the grace which heals the weak, who do not proudly boast a false blessedness of their own, but rather humbly confess their own true wretchedness.

29 Of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, which the ungodliness of the Platonists is ashamed to confess

You proclaim the Father and His Son, Whom you call the intellect or mind of the Father, and between these you place a third, by Whom we take it that that you mean the Holy Spirit; and, as is your custom, you call these three gods. Thus far, though your use of words is incorrect, you do to some extent see as it were a kind of shadowy image of what we should strive towards. You do not, however, wish to acknowledge the incarnation of the immutable Son of God, by which we are saved and through which we are able to come to the things we believe or in some small way understand. You see after a fashion, although at a distance, and with clouded vision, the country in which we should abide; but you do not hold fast to the way that leads to it.

You confess that there is such a thing as grace, however; for you say that it has been granted only to a few to reach God by the power of their intelligence. You do not say, 'It has pleased only a few', or 'Only a few have wished', but 'It has been granted only to a few.' Beyond doubt, then, you acknowledge the grace of God, not the sufficiency of man. Also, you use this kind of speech more clearly still when, following the opinion of Plato, you say that, beyond doubt, a man cannot by any means achieve perfect wisdom in this life, but that those who live according to intellect will find

⁹⁷ 1 Cor. I,20ff.

all that they lack supplied for them after this life by God's providence and grace.⁹⁸

O, if only you had recognised the grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord, and that incarnation of His, by which He took on the soul and body of a man! Then, you might have seen it to be the supreme example of grace. But what am I doing? I know that it is in vain to speak to a dead man; but that applies only to you. Perhaps it is not in vain for those who hold you in high regard: who love you because they love wisdom or are curious to know those arts which you should not have learned. These are the persons whom I address in your name. The grace of God could not have been more graciously commended to us than it was. For the only Son of God, remaining immutable in Himself, put on humanity and bestowed upon mankind the spirit of His love through the mediation of a Man. Through this, it was made possible for us to come to Him, Who was so far from us: to the immortal from the mortal; to the immutable from the mutable; to the righteous from the ungodly; to the blessed from the wretched. And because He had imbued our nature with the desire for blessedness and immortality, He, remaining blessed even while assuming mortality, taught us to despise what we fear by undergoing it Himself, so that He might bestow upon us what we long for.

But you need humility if you are to acquiesce in this truth, and it is very difficult to persuade your neck to accept it. But what is incredible – especially to men like you, whose philosophical speculations ought to have taught you to believe it: what, I say, is incredible to you in the statement that God took a human soul and body? You yourselves, after all, attribute such a degree of excellence to the intellectual soul, which is indeed the human soul, that you say that it can become one in substance with the Mind of the Father, which you confess to be the Son of God. Why is it incredible, then, that, in an ineffable and singular manner, the Son of God should assume one intellectual soul for the salvation of many? Moreover, we know from the testimony of our own nature that a man is whole and complete only when the body is united with a soul. This certainly would be more incredible, if it were not the commonest thing of all. For it is easier to believe in a union between spirit and spirit,

⁹⁸ Cf. *Phaedo*, 66–67B.

or, in the language which you customarily use, between the incorporeal and the corporeal – even though the one were human, the other divine, the one mutable and the other immutable – than in a union between the corporeal and the incorporeal.

Or are you perhaps offended by the unprecedented birth of His body from a virgin? This certainly ought not to offend you. On the contrary, the fact that a miraculous person was miraculously born ought rather to assist you in embracing godliness.

Or do you refuse to believe that, after His body had been given up to death, and had been changed by the resurrection into something better, because now no longer mortal but incorruptible, He lifted it up on high? Perhaps you refuse to believe this because you see that Porphyry, in those very books upon which I have drawn so freely, and in which he writes of the soul's return, so frequently teaches that the soul must leave behind all union with a body in order that the soul may dwell in blessedness with God. But you ought here rather to have corrected the opinion of Porphyry, especially since you hold in common with him such incredible beliefs concerning the soul of this visible world and its huge corporeal mass. For, following Plato,⁹⁹ you say that the world is an animal, and a most blessed animal, and you wish also to say that it is everlasting. How, therefore, is it never to be released from a body, and yet never to lack blessedness, if, in order for the soul to be blessed, the body must be left behind? Also, you acknowledge in your books that the sun and the other stars are bodies; and all men join with you without hesitation in seeing and saying this. But you also declare, in accordance with what you take to be a higher truth, that they are most blessed animals, and that they are united eternally with their bodies. Why, then, when the Christian faith is commended to you, do you forget or pretend not to know what you yourselves habitually discuss or teach? Why do you refuse to become Christians on the ground that you hold opinions which, in fact, you yourselves oppose? Is it not because Christ came in humility, and you are proud? It is possible that those who are most learned in the Christian Scriptures are sometimes too anxious to discuss what kind of bodies the saints will have in the future resurrection.¹⁰⁰ But we do not in the least doubt that those bodies will

⁹⁹ *Tim.*, 30B.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Bk XXII, 12ff.

be everlasting, and that they will be of the kind demonstrated in the example of Christ's resurrection. Whatever their nature may be, however, we preach that they will be entirely incorruptible and immortal, and that they will in no way hinder the contemplation by which the soul is fixed upon God. But you yourselves say that, among the heavenly beings, the bodies of the immortally blessed are themselves immortal. Why, then, are you of opinion that the body must be wholly left behind if blessedness is to be achieved? Why do you seek a seemingly good reason for shunning the Christian faith, if not because, as I say again, Christ is humble and you are proud?

Are you, perhaps, ashamed to be corrected? This is a failing of the proud. It is, presumably, a matter of shame for learned men to leave the school of Plato and become disciples of the Christ Who by His Spirit taught a fisherman to think, and to say:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

This is the beginning of the Holy Gospel called 'According to John'. The old saint Simplicianus,¹⁰¹ who afterwards became bishop of Milan, told me that a certain Platonist used to say that this passage should be written in letters of gold and hung up in the highest place in every church. But the proud deem it of no value to have God as their master, because 'the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us'. It is not enough that these unhappy men are sick. They even exult in their sickness, and they blush to take the medicine which could heal them. By doing this, they are not healed; rather, they fall into a still more grievous affliction.

30 How many Platonic dogmas Porphyry refuted and corrected by his dissent

If it is thought improper to change anything which Plato taught, why did Porphyry himself make so many changes, and these of no

¹⁰¹ Cf. *Confess.*, 8,2; *De praedest. sanct.*, 8,4.

small significance? For it is very certain that Plato wrote that the souls of men return after death to the bodies of beasts.¹⁰² Porphyry's teacher, Plotinus, also held this view;¹⁰³ yet Porphyry thought it proper to reject it.¹⁰⁴ He believed instead that human souls return into human bodies; not into the bodies they have discarded, indeed, but into other new bodies. He blushed, apparently, at the other opinion, for fear that a mother who had returned into the body of a mule might perhaps carry her own son on her back. He did not, however, blush to believe in the possibility that a mother might return into the body of a girl and marry her own son! How much more honourable a thing it is to believe that which was taught by holy and truthful angels; uttered by prophets inspired by the Spirit of God; proclaimed by Him Who was foretold as the coming Saviour by the messengers who went before Him; and preached by the apostles whom He sent forth, and who filled the whole world with His Gospel! How much more honourable a thing it is, I say, to believe that souls return once and for all to their own bodies, than that they return again and again to different ones. As I have said, however, Porphyry did correct this opinion to a great extent, insofar, at least, as he held that human souls can pass only into the bodies of men, and did not in the least doubt that they are not incarcerated in the bodies of brute beasts.

He says also that God put the soul into the world so that, having come to understand the evil nature of material things, it might return to the Father, and never again be defiled by contact with them. Here, his thinking is indeed incorrect in one respect, since the soul is rather given to the body to do good; for it would not learn evil unless it did it. But he nonetheless corrects the opinion of the other Platonists, and on a point of no small importance, when he acknowledges that the soul, once cleansed of all evil and established in the Father's presence, will never again suffer the ills of this world. By taking this view, he entirely abolishes a most important dogma ascribed to the Platonists: that just as dead men are made out of living ones, so are living men are made out of dead ones.¹⁰⁵ Also, he shows to be false the idea which Virgil seems to have taken

¹⁰² *Phaedo*, 81E; *Phaedrus*, 249B; *Rep.*, 10,619Dff; *Tim.*, 42C.

¹⁰³ Cf. Stobaeus, *Eclog. phys.*, 1,52ff.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. *Blk XIII*, 19.

¹⁰⁵ Plato, *Phaedo*, 70cf; Tertullian, *De anima*, 28.

over from Plato: that the purified souls which have been dispatched to the Elysian fields (and this, it seems, is the name given in fable to the joys of the blessed) are called to the river Lethe, that is, to forgetfulness of the past, 'So that, unremembering, they may again behold the vault on high, and once more desire a return to bodies.'¹⁰⁶

Porphiry rightly rejected this idea; for it is indeed a foolish thing to believe that souls might desire to return from that life – which could not be the most blessed life unless its eternity were wholly certain – and to come back into this life, and to the defilement of corruptible bodies, as if the result of perfect purification were only to make iniquity desirable. For if perfect purification brings about forgetfulness of all evils, and if forgetfulness of evils brings about a desire for bodies in which to be once more entangled in evils, then supreme happiness will be the cause of unhappiness, and the perfection of wisdom the cause of folly, and the highest cleansing the cause of defilement. Nor will the soul be truly happy, no matter how long its happiness may last, if, in order to be happy, it must be deceived. For it cannot be happy unless it is free from care; but, in order to be free from care, it must believe that it will always be happy; and this belief is false if it will also at some time be miserable. How, therefore, can the soul rejoice in truth if the cause of its joy is a falsehood? Porphiry saw this, and for this reason said that the purified soul returns to the Father, that it may never again be held fast in the defiling contagion of evil. The opinion of certain Platonists is false, therefore, who believe that there is, as it were, a necessary cycle of passing away and returning from the same to the same. Even if this were true, however, what advantage would there be in knowing it? Would the Platonists venture to prefer their own lot to ours, because we are ignorant in this life of what they will be ignorant of in another and better life when perfected in purity and wisdom: a life during which they must believe in falsehood if they are to be happy? If it is most absurd and foolish to say this, then certainly Porphiry's view is to be preferred to the idea of a cyclic movement of souls through an endless alternation of blessedness and misery. If this is so, then, here is a Platonist dissenting from Plato and taking a better view: here is one who saw what Plato

¹⁰⁶ *Aen.*, 6,750f.

did not see, and who, even though he came after so great and so distinguished a master, did not hesitate to correct him; for he preferred truth to Plato.¹⁰⁷

31 Against the arguments of the Platonists, who assert that the human soul is co-eternal with God

In those matters which we cannot investigate by human ingenuity, therefore, why do we not believe divine revelation, which tells us that the soul is not co-eternal with God, but is created, and once did not exist? It seemed to the Platonists that they had good reason for refusing to believe this; for they remarked that nothing could be everlasting which had not always existed. Yet when Plato writes of the world and of the gods whom God made in the world, he says most clearly that they had a beginning and yet will have no end, but, by the most mighty will of their Creator, will endure for all eternity.¹⁰⁸ By way of interpreting this, however, the Platonists have discovered that he meant a beginning not of time, but of cause. It is, they say, as if a foot had always been implanted in the dust from all eternity: its print would always be there underneath it; no one would doubt that the print had been made by the foot; yet the one would not be earlier than the other, even though the one would have been made by the other. So, they say, the world itself and the gods created in it have been there eternally during the eternal existence of Him Who made them, and yet they were made.

If, then, the soul has always existed, are we to say that its misery has always existed? For if there exists something in it which began in time and has not existed from all eternity, why can the soul itself not have come into being at a certain moment of time, before which it did not exist? Its blessedness also, which, as Porphyry admits, is more substantial, and which endures without end after the soul's experience of evils: beyond doubt, this has a beginning in time, and is to exist eternally; yet previously it did not exist. Thus, the whole argument purporting to show that nothing can be without an end in time, except that which has no beginning in time, collapses. For here we find that the blessedness of the soul, which has had a beginning in time, nonetheless has no end in time.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Cicero, *Tusc. disp.*, 1, 17, 39.

¹⁰⁸ *Tim.*, 41B.

Let the infirmity of man, then, yield to the authority of God, and, with regard to the true religion, let us follow those blessed and immortal spirits who do not seek for themselves that honour which they know to be due to their God and ours. They do not command us to offer sacrifice save to Him alone, Whose sacrifice, as I have often said, and must often say again, both we and they ought to be, offered through that Priest Who, in the human form which He took upon Himself, according to which He also chose to be our Priest, offered Himself even unto death, as a sacrifice for us.¹⁰⁹

32 Of the universal way of the soul's deliverance,
which Porphyry failed to find because he did not
seek it rightly, and which the grace of Christ alone
has disclosed

This is the religion which contains the universal way of the soul's deliverance; for no one can be redeemed other than by this way. It is a kind of royal road, which alone leads to a kingdom which does not fail like all temporal dignities, but which stands secure upon eternal foundations. And when, towards the end of his first book on the soul's return, Porphyry says that no system of thought which contains the universal way of the soul's deliverance has yet been received, either from the truest philosophy, or from the morals and practices of the Indians, or from the initiations of the Chaldeans, or from any other direction, and that no such way has yet come to his knowledge from his historical investigations, he acknowledges beyond doubt that there is such a way, but that he does not yet know what it is. Nothing of all that he had so studiously learned and seemed to others, if not to himself, to know and believe concerning the soul's deliverance, was enough for him. For he understood that there was still a need for some pre-eminent authority which ought to be followed in so great a matter. And when he says that a system which contains the universal way of the soul's deliverance has never yet come to his knowledge even from the truest philosophy, it seems to me that he here shows clearly either that the philosophy of which he himself was a practitioner was not

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Phil. 2,8; Heb. 5,5f; 8,1ff; 9,11ff.

the truest, or that it did not contain such a way. And how can a philosophy which does not contain such a way be the truest one? For what else is the universal way of the soul's deliverance if not that by which all souls universally are redeemed, and without which, therefore, no soul is redeemed? And when he adds to what he has already said, 'or from the morals and practices of the Indians, or from the initiations of the Chaldeans, or from any other direction', he attests in the clearest possible language that this universal way of the soul's deliverance was not contained in what he had learned either from the Indians or the Chaldeans. Yet he could not remain silent as to the fact that it was from the Chaldeans that he had derived those divine oracles of which he so constantly makes mention.

What, then, does he wish us to understand by this universal way of the soul's deliverance? It has not yet been disclosed by even the truest philosophy, or by the doctrines of those nations reputed to have great knowledge of things divine because they were stronger in their curiosity to know and worship angels; nor has it come to be known by way of historical investigation. What is this universal way if not a way which belongs not to one nation as its special property, but to all the nations together, as a divine gift?

Porphyry, who is certainly a man of no mean intellect, has no doubt that such a way exists; for he does not believe that Divine Providence could have left the human race without such a universal way of delivering the soul. He does not say that there is no such way, but only that this great good and succour has not yet been discovered, or has not yet come to his knowledge. And this is not to be wondered at; for Porphyry lived at a stage in human affairs when this universal way of the soul's deliverance, which is none other than the Christian religion, was allowed to be persecuted by idolaters and demon-worshippers and earthly rulers. This was so that the number of martyrs – that is, of witnesses to the truth – might be made up and consecrated, and that it might be shown by their example that we are to endure all corporeal ills for the sake of our holy faith, and for the commendation of the truth. Porphyry, however, when he saw these persecutions, supposed that this way would quickly perish because of them; and he therefore concluded that this was not the universal way of the soul's deliverance. He did

not understand that the very evils which disturbed him and which he feared would befall him if he chose that way served only to establish it more firmly and commend it more strongly.

This, then, is the universal way of the soul's deliverance, granted by the divine mercy to all the nations. And no nation whatsoever to which the knowledge of it has already come, or may come in the future, should ask, Why now? or Why so late? For the counsels of Him Who sends it cannot be penetrated by the human intellect. Even Porphyry realised this when he said that the gift of God was not yet received, and that it had not yet come to his knowledge. For even though he had not yet received it as part of his faith, or even though it had not yet come to his knowledge, he did not on that account conclude that the gift does not exist.

This, I say, is the universal way for the deliverance of believers, concerning which the faithful Abraham received the divine oracle, 'In thy seed shall all nations be blessed.'¹¹⁰ He, indeed, was of the race of the Chaldeans; but, so that he might receive these great promises, and so that there might be propagated from him a seed 'ordained by angels in the hand of a Mediator'¹¹¹ through Whom this universal way of the soul's deliverance might be given to all nations, he was commanded to leave his country and his kindred and his father's house.

Then, for the first time, he himself was delivered from the superstitions of the Chaldeans, and he began to follow and worship the one true God, in Whose promises he faithfully believed. This is the universal way, of which it is said in holy prophecy, 'God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us; that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations.'¹¹² Hence, when, so long afterwards, our Saviour had taken flesh of the seed of Abraham, He said of Himself, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.'¹¹³ This is the universal way, of which it had been prophesied so long before,

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the moun-

¹¹⁰ Gen. 22,18.

¹¹¹ Gal. 3,19.

¹¹² Psalm 67,2f.

¹¹³ John 14,6.

tains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Sion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.¹¹⁴

This way, therefore, is not the way of one nation, but of all nations. The law and the word of the Lord did not remain in Sion and Jerusalem, but went forth thence to be spread abroad to the whole world. And therefore, after His resurrection, the Mediator Himself said to His trembling disciples:

These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. Then opened He their understandings that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.¹¹⁵

This, then, is the universal way of the soul's deliverance, which the holy angels and the holy prophets first foretold where they could among those few men who found the grace of God. They did this by certain manifest pronouncements and by many veiled ones, especially in the Hebrew nation, whose commonwealth was in a certain sense consecrated to foreshadow and herald, by its tabernacles and temple and priesthood and sacrifices, the City of God which was to be gathered in from all the nations. Then came the Mediator Himself, in the flesh, and His blessed apostles. In revealing the grace of the New Testament, they showed more clearly those things which, in earlier times, had been signified only in a veiled way. This revelation was according to the distribution of the ages of the human race, as it pleased God in His wisdom to ordain them; and it was attested also by signs and miracles of divine power, some few of which I have already cited above. For not only did there appear angelic visions; not only were the words of these

¹¹⁴ Is. 2,3.

¹¹⁵ Luke 24,44f.

heavenly ministers heard to ring forth: also, men of God, acting only through the word of simple piety, cast out unclean spirits from the bodies and senses of men, and healed bodily injuries and sicknesses. The wild animals of the earth and the waters, the birds of the air, the trees, the elements and the stars, obeyed the divine commands. The infernal powers yielded to them; the dead were restored to life. I here omit the miracles peculiar and proper to the Saviour himself, especially His nativity and resurrection; but whereas, in the former, He demonstrated the mystery of His own virgin birth only, in the latter He gave a pattern to all who are to be resurrected on the last day.

This way cleanses the whole man, and prepares each of the parts of which a mortal man is made for immortality. We need not seek one purification for the part which Porphyry calls intellectual, and another for the part he calls spiritual, and another for the body itself; for our most true and mighty Purifier and Saviour took upon Himself the whole of human nature. Except by this way – which the human race has never lacked; for, formerly, it was foretold that these things would come to pass, and then it was announced that they have come to pass – no one has been redeemed, no one is redeemed, and no one shall be redeemed.

Porphyry says that the universal way of the soul's deliverance had never yet come to his knowledge through the study of history. But what more illustrious history can be found than that which has taken possession of the whole world because its authority is so eminent? Or what history could be more faithful than that which both narrates past events and foretells future ones, so many of the predictions of which have been fulfilled that we are enabled to believe without doubt that the rest will be fulfilled also?

For neither Porphyry nor any of the other Platonists can despise divination and prediction as such, even in relation to things pertaining to this life and to earthly things. They do, indeed, properly despise mere soothsaying and other forms or arts of divination. They deny that these are the pronouncements of great men, or that any great importance attaches to them; and they are right. For sometimes these predictions rest upon previous knowledge of secondary causes, in the same way that the art of the physician can predict much of the course of a disease by means of certain antecedent symptoms. Or again, unclean demons foretell deeds that they

have already resolved to do, so that then, with an appearance of authority, they may guide the minds and lusts of the wicked and induce base human frailty to act in ways which seem to vindicate their predictions. But it was not such things as these that the saints who followed the universal way of the soul's deliverance took care to prophesy as being of great importance. They did not shun unimportant things; for they often foretold such things in order to strengthen faith in the things which cannot be intimated to the senses of mortal men or quickly and easily demonstrated by experience. But there were other truly great and divine things to come of which, insofar as it was given to them to know the will of God, they were the heralds. The incarnation of Christ, and all the wondrous things that were accomplished by Him or in His name; the penitence of men and the turning of their wills to God; the remission of sins; the grace of righteousness; the faith of the godly, and of the multitudes in all parts of the world who believe in the true Divinity; the overthrow of those who worship images and demons, and the trial of the faithful by temptations; the purification of those who endure, and their deliverance from every evil; the day of judgment; the resurrection of the dead; the eternal damnation of the fellowship of the ungodly; and the everlasting reign of the most glorious City of God in endless enjoyment of the vision of God: all these things were foretold and promised in the Scriptures of this way. And we see so many of these promises fulfilled that we righteously and piously trust that the rest will also be fulfilled in time to come. As for those who do not believe, and therefore do not understand, that, according to what is truly foretold and proclaimed in Holy Scripture, this is the way of righteousness which leads directly to the vision of God and to eternal union with Him: these may assail us, but they cannot overthrow us.

In these ten books, then, even if not as successfully as some have hoped of me, I have, as the true God and Lord has deigned to help me, satisfied the desire of certain persons by refuting the objections of the ungodly, who prefer their own gods to the Founder of the Holy City of which we have undertaken to speak. Of these ten books, the first five were written against those who believe that we should worship the gods for the sake of the blessings of this life, and the second five against those who suppose that the worship of the gods should be cultivated for the sake of the life which is to

come after death. Next, in order to fulfil my promise made in the first book, I shall, with divine aid, say such things as I consider necessary concerning the origin, progress and merited ends of the two cities, which, as I have already said, are implicated and mixed with one another in this world.

Book XI

I Of the next part of this work, in which we begin to demonstrate the origin and end of the two cities, that is, the heavenly and the earthly

The City of God of which we speak is that to which the Scriptures bear witness: the Scriptures which, excelling all the writings of all the nations in their divine authority,¹ have brought under their sway every kind of human genius, not by a chance motion of the soul, but clearly by the supreme disposition of providence. For it is there written: 'Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.'² And in another psalm we read: 'Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness, increasing the joy of the whole earth.'³ And a little later in the same psalm: 'As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God. God has established it for ever.'⁴ And again in another: 'There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of our God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved.'⁵ From these testimonies – and there are others of the same kind, but it would take too long to mention them all – we have learned that there is a city of God, whose citizens we long to be because of the love with which its Founder has inspired us.

The citizens of the earthly city prefer their own gods to the Founder of this holy city, for they do not know that he is the God of gods. Not of false gods, however, who are impious and proud, and who, deprived of His immutable light in which all may share, are thereby reduced to a kind of destitute power: who strive after certain personal privileges of their own, and who seek divine honours from their misguided subjects. Rather, He is the God of pious and holy gods, who take delight rather in submitting themselves to One than in subjecting many to themselves, and in worshipping God than in being worshipped in place of God.⁶

¹ Cf. Augustine, *De doct. Christ.*, 2,63.

² Psalm 87,3.

³ Psalm 48,1f.

⁴ Psalm 48,8.

⁵ Psalm 46,4f.

⁶ Cf. Bk IX,23; X,1.

We have, then, replied to the enemies of this holy city in the ten preceding books, as far as we were able to do so and with the aid of our Lord and King. Now, however, knowing what is expected of me and not unmindful of my duty, and again relying upon the ever-present help of that same Lord and King, I shall treat as fully as I can of the origin and progress and merited ends of the two cities – that is, of the earthly and heavenly – which, as we have said, are in this present world mixed together and, in a certain sense, entangled with one another. First, I shall speak of how these two cities had their origin in the difference that arose among the angels.

2 Of the knowledge of God, to which no man attains other than through the man Christ Jesus, the Mediator between God and men

It is a thing great and most rare for a man, after he has contemplated the whole corporeal and incorporeal creation and found it mutable, to pass beyond it by effort of mind and arrive at the immutable substance of God, there to learn from God Himself that every nature which is not what God is has been made by Him alone. For God does not speak to such a man through some corporeal creature which resonates in his bodily ears by means of vibrations of the air in the space between the source of the sound and its hearer. Nor does He do so by means of a spiritual being having the likeness of a body, such as we see in dreams or other such states (for even in this case He speaks as if to the body's ears, because it is by means of a body that he seems to speak and with an appearance of material space intervening; for such visions are very like bodies). Rather, He speaks by truth itself, if anyone is able to hear Him with the mind rather than with the body: He speaks to that in man which is better than every other part of him which makes him a man, and than which there is nothing better save God alone. For since man is most rightly understood – or, if that cannot be, then at least believed – to be made in the image of God, there is no doubt that he is brought closer to God by that part of him whereby he rises above the lower parts which he has in common with the beasts. But the mind itself, even though reason and intelligence dwell in it by nature, is by its dark and inveterate faults made unable not only to embrace and

enjoy but even to bear His immutable light until it has been renewed from day to day, and healed, and made capable of such great felicity; and so it had first to be imbued with faith, and so purified. And in order that the mind might walk more confidently towards the truth, the Truth itself, God, God's son, assuming humanity without putting aside His Godhood, established and founded this faith, that man might find a way to man's God through God made man. For this is 'the Mediator between God and man: the man Christ Jesus'.⁷ For it is as man that He is the Mediator and the Way.⁸ If there is a way between one who strives and that towards which he strives, there is hope of his reaching his goal; but if there is no way, or if he is ignorant of it, how does it help him to know what the goal is? The only way that is wholly defended against all error is when one and the same person is at once God and man: God our goal, man our way.

3 Of the authority of the canonical Scriptures composed by the Divine Spirit

This Mediator, having said to us as much as He judged sufficient, first by the prophets, then in His own person, and later through the apostles, also established the Scriptures which are called canonical. These have the most eminent authority, and we trust them in all matters of which it is not expedient for us to be ignorant but which we are not capable of knowing for ourselves. For we can have knowledge of objects which are not remote from our senses, whether these senses be interior or exterior (which is why such objects are called 'present', because we say that they are 'before our senses' [*prae sensibus*]: for example, what is present to the eyes is 'before the eyes'). As to objects remote from our senses, however, because we cannot know such things by the testimony of our own senses, we require the testimony of others in respect of them, and we rely upon those from whose senses we do not believe the objects in question to be, or to have been, remote. Thus, in the case of visible things which we ourselves have not seen, we rely upon those who have seen them; and likewise with all the other things which

⁷ 1 Tim. 2,5.

⁸ John 14,6.

pertain to the bodily senses. So too, there are other things which are perceived by the mind and the reason; and such perception is quite rightly called a kind of sense, because it involves judgment [*sententia*], a word which is derived from *sensus*.⁹ Hence, in the case of invisible things which are remote from our own interior sense, it is fitting for us to believe those who have seen them arrayed in incorporeal light, or who abide in contemplation of them.

**4 Of the creation of the world, which is neither
without beginning, nor yet created by a new decree
of God, as if He afterwards willed what He had not
willed before**

Of all visible things, the world is the greatest; of all invisible things, the greatest is God. But we see that the world exists, whereas we believe that God exists. That God made the world, we can believe from no one more securely than from God Himself. Where have we heard Him? Nowhere more clearly than in the Holy Scriptures, where His prophet said: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.'¹⁰ Was this prophet there when God made the heavens and the earth? No; but the Wisdom of God, by Whom all things were made, was there, and this Wisdom causes itself to pass over into holy souls, and makes them the friends and prophets of God,¹¹ and speaks soundlessly within them of His works. The angels of God, who always behold the Father's face,¹² also speak to them, and proclaim His will to those whom it befits. Of these prophets was he who said and wrote, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' And so worthy was he as a witness to belief in God that the same Spirit of God Who revealed these things to his knowledge also enabled him, so long ago, to predict our future faith.

But why did it please the eternal God to make the heavens and the earth then, when He had not made them before?¹³ If those who say this wish to suggest that the world is eternal and without any

⁹ Cf. Quintilian, *Inst. orat.*, 8,5,1.

¹⁰ Gen. 1,1.

¹¹ Cf. Wisd. 7,27; Prov. 8,27.

¹² Cf. Matt. 18,10.

¹³ Cf. Cicero, *De nat. deor.*, 1,9,21; Augustine, *De genesi contra Manichaeos*, 1,3,4; *Confess.*, 11,12.

beginning, and that it has therefore not been made by God, they are greatly astray from the truth, and they rave in the deadly madness of ungodliness. For, even leaving aside the voices of the prophets, the world itself, by the perfect order of its changes and motions, and by the great beauty of all things visible, proclaims by a kind of silent testimony of its own both that it has been created, and also that it could not have been made other than by a God ineffable and invisible in greatness, and ineffable and invisible in beauty.

There are, indeed, those who confess that the world was made by God, but who wish to say that, although it was created, it did not have a beginning in time, so that, in some scarcely intelligible sense, it was always created. They say this because it seems to them to defend God from the charge of acting on a chance impulse; for they do not wish it to be believed that the idea of creating the world suddenly came into His mind having never been there before, or that a new act of will occurred in Him even though He is in no respect mutable. I do not see, however, how this explanation of theirs can survive in respect of other things, and especially in respect of the soul. For if they contend that the soul is co-eternal with God, they will in no way be able to explain how any new misery can accrue to it which has never accrued to it before in all eternity. For if they say that its misery and blessedness have always succeeded one another, they must also necessarily say that this succession will continue for ever. From this, however, follows the absurd conclusion that, even though the soul is called blessed, it is certainly not so insofar as it foresees its own misery and disgrace. If, on the other hand, it does not foresee these things, but supposes that it will be neither disgraced nor miserable, but always blessed, then it is blessed only because it entertains a false opinion; and nothing more foolish can be said than this. It may be that they believe that the soul's blessedness has alternated with misery for infinite ages past, but that now, once it has been set free, it will never again return to misery. Even if they think this, however, they are still convicted of believing that it never was truly blessed before, but only now begins to enjoy blessedness of a kind which is not false. If they say this, they confess that something new, great and magnificent has happened to the soul, which has never happened before in the whole of eternity. If they deny that the cause of this new experience was included in the eternal purpose of God, they

simultaneously deny that he is the Author of the soul's blessedness, which is a blasphemous impiety. But if they say that God formulated a new plan, and decided that the soul should henceforth be blessed for all eternity, how will they demonstrate that God is not subject to that mutability which also displeases them?¹⁴

If, however, they acknowledge that the soul was created in time but will never perish in time – that, like number, it has a beginning, but no end – and that therefore, having once experienced miseries and been released from them, it will never again know misery in the future, they will certainly not doubt that this occurs without any alteration of God's immutable purpose. By the same token, then, let them believe that the world too could have been made in time, yet that God did not on that account change His eternal purpose and will in making it.

5 That we are not to try to conceive of infinite ages of time before the world, nor of infinite realms of space outside the world; for, just as there are no periods of time before it, so also are there no spatial locations outside it

We must next consider what response we are to give to those who agree that God is the Creator of the world, but who nonetheless seek to know the time of its creation. We must also consider what answer they will give as to the place of the world's creation. For just as they ask why it was created when it was and not earlier, so also can the question arise of why it was created here, where it is, and not anywhere else. For if they contemplate infinite expanses of time before the world existed, during which they cannot conceive of God's being inactive, they may similarly conceive infinite expanses of space outside the world, in which, if anyone says that the Almighty could not have been idle, will it not follow that they are compelled to share Epicurus's fancy of innumerable worlds?¹⁵ The only difference will be that, whereas Epicurus asserts that these worlds are formed and destroyed by the random movements of atoms, our adversaries will say that they are made as the work of

¹⁴ Cf. Bk x, 31.

¹⁵ Cf. Lucretius, *De rerum nat.*, 2, 1048f.

God; for they maintain that, throughout the endless immensity of space extending in every direction outside the world, God cannot rest, and that the worlds which they believe Him to make cannot by any means be destroyed.

We are, however, here dealing only with those who believe, as we do, that God is incorporeal and the Creator of all natures that are not Himself. It would be altogether unworthy to enter into religious dispute with others, and especially with those who suppose that divine honours are to be paid to many gods. But those with whom we are dealing have acquired a degree of nobility and authority among other philosophers because, though they are still far from the truth, they are at least closer to it than the rest.

Will these philosophers, then, admit that God's substance is unenclosed, unbounded and unextended in space, and believe, as it is proper to believe of God, that the whole of Him is incorporeally present everywhere, yet still say that He is absent from the vast spaces outside the world: that He is occupied only with the one place in which the world is located, small though it is in comparison with infinity? In my opinion, they will not proceed to give voice to such absurdities. Since, therefore, they say that there is only one world, huge in its corporeal extent, indeed, yet finite, and in its own determinate position, and that this was made by the working of God, let them give the same answer to the question of God's resting from work in the infinite times before the world existed as they give to that of God's resting from work in the infinite spaces outside it. And just as it does not follow that God established the world in its present location and in no other by chance rather than by divine reason, although no human reason can comprehend why the divine reason did this, and though the place chosen had no particular excellence to make it preferable to an infinite number of others, so neither does it follow that we should suppose that God was guided by chance when He created the world at the point at which He did and not earlier, though previous times had been elapsing in the same fashion during the infinite extent of the past, and though there was no difference by which one period of time should be chosen rather than another.

But if they say that the thoughts of men are vain when they imagine infinite space, since there is no space outside the world, we answer that it is by the same token vain to conceive of the past

times during which God was idle, since there is no time before the world.¹⁶

6 That the creation of the world and the beginning of time both occurred simultaneously, and that the one did not come before the other

For if eternity and time are rightly distinguished by the fact that time does not exist without some movement and change, whereas in eternity there is no change,¹⁷ who does not see that there could have been no time had not some creature been made which, by some movement, could bring about change? For the different phases of movement and change cannot all occur at the same time. Rather, as one phase ends, another succeeds it, and time is what constitutes the longer or shorter intervals between these phases. Since, then, God, in Whose eternity there is no change of any kind, is the Creator and Ordainer of time, I do not see how He can be said to have created the world after the lapse of periods of time, unless it be said that, before the world was made, there was some creature by virtue of whose movements time could pass.¹⁸

Moreover, when the sacred and wholly truth-laden Scriptures say that 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth', this is so that we may know that nothing was made before the heavens and the earth; for if something was made before them, it is this something that would then be said to have been made 'in the beginning'. Beyond doubt, then, the world was made not in time, but simultaneously with time. For that which is made in time is made both after and before some time: after that which is past, and before that which is to come. But there could have been no 'past' before the creation, because there was then no creature by whose changing movements time could be enacted. If change and movement were created when the world was created, then, time and the world were created simultaneously; and this seems to be borne out by the order of the first six or seven days. For the morning and the

¹⁶ See R. W. Dyson, 'St Augustine's Remarks on Time', *Downside Review* (1982), pp. 221ff.

¹⁷ Cf. Augustine, *Serm.*, 117, 10.

¹⁸ Cf. Augustine, *De gen. ad lit.*, 5, 12.

evening of these days are all counted, until, on the sixth day, all the things which God has made are finished; and, on the seventh, there is established the great mystery of God's rest.¹⁹ But what kind of days these were it is extremely difficult, or even impossible, for us to conceive, still less to express.²⁰

7 Of the nature of the first three days, which are said to have had a morning and an evening before the sun was made

We see, indeed, that the days known to us have no evening other than by the setting of the sun, nor morning other than by its rising. The first three days of all, however, passed without the sun, because the sun is said to have been made on the fourth day. First of all, indeed, light was made by the Word of God, and we are told that God divided it from the darkness, and called the light Day, and the darkness Night. But what kind of light it was, and by what alternating movement it made evening and morning, are things removed from our perception. Nor can we understand how it was; but we must nonetheless believe it without hesitation. For either it was some corporeal light, whether in the upper part of the world, far removed from our sight, or shining from the place where the sun was afterwards kindled; or the word 'light' was used of that holy city whose citizens are the holy angels and blessed spirits:²¹ that city of which the apostle says, 'Jerusalem which is above is our eternal mother in heaven.'²² And he also says in another place, 'For ye are all the children of the light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness.'²³

But there is another sense in which we may appropriately understand the statement that the day had a morning and an evening even before the sun was made. For, in comparison with the Creator's knowledge, the knowledge of the creature is like a kind of evening light. But when our knowledge is directed to the praise and love of the Creator, it dawns and is made morning; and night never falls

¹⁹ Cf. Heb. 4,4ff.

²⁰ Cf. *De gen. ad lit.*, 4,1.

²¹ Cf. e.g. *Confess.*, 12,15; *De gen. ad lit.*, 1,32f; 4,45ff.

²² Gal. 4,26.

²³ 1 Thess. 5,5.

while the Creator is not forsaken by the creature's love. Accordingly, when Scripture enumerates those days in order, it never includes the word 'night'. It never says, 'There was night', but 'The evening and the morning were the first day'; and so too with the second, and so on. And, indeed, the knowledge which created things have of themselves is, so to speak, shadowy until they see themselves in the light of God's wisdom and, as it were, in relation to the art by which they were made. Therefore, evening can be called a more suitable symbol than night. Yet, as I have said, morning returns when the creature returns to the praise and love of the Creator. When it does so in the knowledge of itself, that is the first day. When it does so in the knowledge of the firmament which, lying between the lower waters and the higher, is called heaven, that is the second day. When it does so in the knowledge of the earth, the sea, and of all the things that spring from the earth and have their roots in it, that is the third day. When it does so in the knowledge of the greater and lesser lights of heaven, and of all the stars, that is the fourth day. When it does so in the knowledge of all the living things that swim in the waters and of all that fly, that is the fifth day. And when it does so in the knowledge of all the beasts of the earth and of man himself, that is the sixth day.

8 How we are to understand God's rest, and in what sense He rested on the seventh day after six days of work

When God rested from all His works on the seventh day, and hallowed it, we are not to understand this in a childish sense, as though God laboured at His task. For He 'spake and it was done',²⁴ with a word which was not audible and transient, but intelligible and eternal. Rather, God's rest signifies the rest of those who rest in God, just as the joy of a house means the joy of those who rejoice in the house. This is true even when it is not the house itself that makes them rejoice, but something else. How much more true is it, then, when it is the house itself, by its own beauty, that makes those who dwell in it rejoice! For, here, not only is it called joyful according to that figure of speech in which the thing contained is signified by

²⁴ Psalm 148,5; 33,9.

what contains it (as when we say, 'The theatres applaud' or 'The meadows low', meaning that the people in the one applaud and the cattle in the other low), but also according to that figure in which cause is signified by effect, as when a letter is said to be joyful because it makes those who read it joyful. Most appropriately, therefore, when prophetic authority tells us that God rested, it signifies by this that those rest who are in Him, and whom He causes to rest. And the prophecy also promises the men to whom it speaks, and for whose sake it was written, that they themselves, after those good works which God performs in them and by them, shall have eternal rest in Him if they have first drawn near to Him in this life by faith. This was symbolised for the people of God in ancient times by the Sabbath rest enjoined in their Law; but this must, I think, be dealt with more carefully in its proper place.²⁵

9 What, according to the divine testimony, we are to believe concerning the creation of the angels

For the time being, I have undertaken to speak of the foundation of the holy city; and I have thought it necessary to speak first of the holy angels who form so a great a part of that city, and who are all the more blessed because they have never strayed from it. With God's help, then, and so far as shall seem sufficient, I shall now attempt to expound what the divine testimony tells us of these things.

When the sacred writings tell of the creation of the world, it is not said plainly whether the angels were created or not, or in what order. Unless they were omitted from the account altogether, however, their creation is either included in the word 'heaven' where it is said, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth', or perhaps in the word 'light', of which I have already spoken. And I do not think that they can have been omitted, for it is written that 'on the seventh day, God rested from all His works which he had made'. Also, the Book of Genesis itself commences with the words, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth'. God, then, seems to have made nothing before the heaven and the earth. He began with the heaven and the earth, and, as Scripture then goes

²⁵ Cf. Bk xxii, 30.

on to say, the earth itself was invisible and without form when it was first made, for light had not yet been created, and darkness covered the face of the deep: covered, that is, the indiscriminate confusion of earth and water; for where there is no light, there is necessarily darkness. But if all things were then disposed in the work of creation which, as we are told, was completed in six days, why should the angels be omitted, as if they were not among those works from which God rested on the seventh day? Clearly, the angels are a work of God, and therefore are not omitted here, even though they are not mentioned explicitly. Elsewhere, moreover, Holy Scripture attests in the clearest possible way that they are a work of God. For in the hymn of the three men in the furnace it is said, 'O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord';²⁶ and the angels are then named in the following recital of those same works. Also, it is said in the psalm:

Praise ye the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the heights.
Praise ye Him, all His angels; praise ye Him, all His hosts.
Praise ye Him, sun and moon; praise Him, all ye stars of light.
Praise Him, ye heaven of heavens; and ye waters that be above
the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord; for He
commanded, and they were created.²⁷

Here, most clearly and by divine authority, the angels are said to have been made by God; for they are included among the other things of heaven, and it is said of all of them that 'He commanded, and they were created.' Who, then, will venture the opinion that the angels were made only after the things numbered in the six days of creation? If anyone is so foolish, his folly is refuted by a Scripture of equal authority, where God says, 'When the stars were made, the angels praised me with a loud voice.'²⁸ The angels, therefore, already existed when the stars were made, and the stars were made on the fourth day. Shall we, then, say that the angels were made on the third day? God forbid; for we know already what was made on that day: the earth was separated

²⁶ Dan. 3,57 (LXX).

²⁷ Psalm 148,1 ff.

²⁸ Job 38,7.

from the waters, and each of the two elements assumed the form appropriate to its own kind; and the earth brought forth everything that is rooted in it. On the second day, perhaps? No, indeed; for then was made the firmament called heaven which is between the higher and lower waters, in which firmament were placed the stars made on the fourth day.

There is no doubt, therefore, that if the angels belong to the works of God completed during these six days, they are that light which received the name 'day', and whose unity is indicated when it is called, not the 'first day', but 'one day'. Nor is it otherwise with the second day, the third, and so on. Rather, the same expression 'one day' is repeated²⁹ until the number is made up to six or seven, so that there should be a sevenfold knowledge: that is, of the six days during which God made His works, and the seventh, when God rested. For when God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light, if this light is rightly understood to mean the creation of the angels, then surely they have been made partakers of the eternal Light which is the immutable Wisdom of God, by which all things were made, and which we call the only-begotten Son of God. Thus, enlightened by the Light that created them, the angels became light and were called 'day' because they shared in that immutable Light: in the day that is the Word of God, by which both they and all other things were made. 'The true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world',³⁰ also enlightens every pure angel, so that he may be light not in himself, but in God. But if an angel turns away from God, he becomes impure, as are all those who are called unclean spirits, and are no longer 'light in the Lord',³¹ but darkness in themselves because deprived of their participation in the eternal Light. For evil has no nature of its own. Rather, it is the absence of good which has received the name 'evil'.³²

²⁹ Not, however, in English translations of Gen. 1,5ff.

³⁰ John 1,9.

³¹ Eph. 5,8.

³² Cf. Plotinus, *Enn.*, 3,2,5; see also Ch. 22, and Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 4.

10 Of the simple and immutable Trinity, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, one God, in whom quality and substance are one and the same

There is, then, a Good which alone is simple, and therefore alone immutable, and this is God. By this Good all other goods have been created; but they are not simple, and therefore are not immutable. 'Created', I say: that is, made, not begotten. For 'That Which is begotten of the simple Good is Itself simple, and is the same as That of Which It is begotten. These two we call the Father and the Son, and both, together with the Holy Spirit, are one God. And this Spirit of the Father and of the Son is given the name 'Holy Spirit' in the sacred writings as its special title.

But the Holy Spirit is another person than the Father and the Son, for He is neither the Father nor the Son. But I say 'another person' and not 'another thing', because He, like them, is simple, and, like them, He is the immutable and co-eternal Good. This Trinity is one God: it is simple even though it is a Trinity. For we do not say that the nature of the good is simple because it is in the Father only, or only in the Son, or only in the Holy Spirit. Nor, as the heretics who follow Sabellius have supposed, is it a Trinity in name only, having no distinctly subsisting Persons. Rather, it is called simple because it is what it has, except insofar as one Person is spoken of in relation to another. For the Father indeed has a Son, and yet He is not Himself the Son; and the Son has a Father, and yet He is not Himself the Father. In respect to Himself, however, and not to the other, each is what He has: thus, in respect to Himself He is said to be alive, for He has life, and He is Himself the life which He has.

It is for this reason, then, that the nature of the Trinity is called simple, because it has not anything that it can lose, and because it is not something different from what it has, in the way that a vessel is different from its liquid or a body from its colour or the air from its light or heat, or the mind from its wisdom. For none of these things is what it has: the vessel is not liquid; the body is not colour; the air is not light or heat; the mind is not wisdom. And hence they can be deprived of what they have, and can be turned or changed into other states or qualities: the vessel may be emptied of the liquid

of which it is full; the body may be discoloured; the air may grow dark or cold; the mind may become foolish. The incorruptible body which is promised to the saints at the resurrection does, indeed, have a quality of incorruption which cannot be lost; but the bodily substance and the quality of incorruption are still not the same thing. For the quality of incorruption exists entire in each single part of the body. It is not greater in one part and less in another, for no one part is more incorruptible than another. The body is, indeed, greater in the whole than in the part, and one part of it is larger, another smaller; but the larger part is not more incorruptible than the smaller. The body, then, which is not present in its entirety in each of its parts is one thing, whereas incorruptibility, which is completely present throughout the whole body, is something else; for every part of the incorruptible body, however unequal to the rest it may be in other respects, is equally incorruptible. For example, the hand is not more incorruptible than the finger, even though the hand is larger than the finger; and so, though the finger and the hand are unequal in size, hand and finger are alike in being incorruptible. And so, although incorruptibility is inseparable from an incorruptible body, the substance by virtue of which it is called a body is nonetheless one thing, and the quality by virtue of which it is described as incorruptible is another; and so the body is not what it has.

Again, the soul itself, though it will be forever wise when redeemed in eternity, will be so by participation in an immutable Wisdom which is not itself. For though the air is never deprived of the light with which it is infused, the air is still one thing and the light by which it is illuminated is another. I do not here say that the soul is air, as has been supposed by some who were not able to conceive of an incorporeal nature.³³ Though they are very unlike, however, the two things do have a degree of similarity by reason of which it is not inappropriate to say that the incorporeal soul is enlightened by the incorporeal light of God's simple wisdom, just as the corporeal air is illuminated by corporeal light; and that, just as the air grows dark when deprived of light (for what is called darkness in the corporeal sense is nothing but air lacking light),³⁴

³³ Cf. Aristotle, *De anima*, 1,2,15.

³⁴ Cf. Augustine, *De gen. contra Man.*, 1,7.

so the soul grows dark when it is deprived of the light of wisdom.

According to this, therefore, those things which are fundamentally and truly divine are called simple, because in them quality and substance are one and the same, and because they are divine, or wise, or blessed without participation in anything which is not themselves. In Holy Scripture, it is true, the Spirit of Wisdom is called 'manifold' because it contains many things within itself.³⁵ What it contains, however, it also is, and, being one, it is all these things. For wisdom is not many things, but one thing, in which there are immense and infinite treasures of intelligible things, and in which reside all the invisible and immutable forms of the visible and mutable things made by it. For God made nothing unknowingly; not even a human craftsman can rightly be said to do so. If He made everything with knowledge, however, then, surely, what He made He knew; and from this there occurs to the mind a wondrous, but nonetheless true, thought: that this world could not be known to us if it did not exist, but it could not exist if it were not known to God.³⁶

**11 Whether we are to believe that even those
spirits who did not remain steadfast in the truth
participated in that blessedness which the holy
angels always possessed from the beginning**

These things being so, then, those spirits whom we call angels were not darkness in any way or for any duration of time; rather, as soon as they were made, they were made light. They were not, however, created in this way so that they might exist and live in any fashion whatsoever. On the contrary, they were made light so that they might live wisely and blessedly. Certain angels, having turned away from the Light, have not obtained the excellence of a wise and blessed life, which is eternal beyond doubt, and whose eternity is assured and certain. But they still have the life of reason, even though they are foolish; and in such a way that they cannot lose it even if they wish to do so. But who can specify the extent to which they shared in that Wisdom before they sinned? And how shall we say they participated

³⁵ *Wisd.* 7,22.

³⁶ *Cf. Confess.*, 13,38.

in it equally with those who are truly and fully blessed because they do not err in supposing that their blessedness is eternal? For if they had shared equally in Wisdom, then the wicked angels would have remained eternally blessed with the good, because both would have been equally sure of the eternality of their blessedness. For no matter how long a life may be, it cannot truly be called eternal if it is to have an end; for it is called life inasmuch as it is lived, but eternal because it has no end. Thus, although everything eternal is not therefore blessed – for it is said that the penal fires are eternal – yet, if no life is truly and perfectly blessed unless it is eternal, the life of the wicked angels was not blessed, for it was to come to an end, and therefore was not eternal, whether they knew it or, not knowing it, believed otherwise. For it is certain that, if they knew it, fear, and if they did not know it, ignorance, would prevent them from being blessed. And even if, being ignorant, they still did not trust in false and uncertain hopes, but remained uncertain as to whether their happiness was eternal or would at some time end, this very doubt concerning so great a happiness would be inconsistent with the fully blessed life which we believe belongs to the holy angels; for we do not define the meaning of the term ‘blessedness’ so narrowly as to say that only God is blessed. God, however, is so truly blessed that there can be no greater blessedness than His; and, in comparison with His blessedness, what does that of the angels amount to, even though, according to their own capacity for blessedness, they are supremely blessed?

12 A comparison of the blessedness of the righteous
who have not yet received the divine reward
promised them with that of the first human beings in
Paradise before they sinned³⁷

But the angels are not the only parts of the rational and intellectual creation whom we think it proper to call blessed. For who will venture to deny that the first human beings in Paradise were blessed before they sinned, even though they were uncertain as to how long their blessedness would last and whether it would be eternal (although it would have been eternal had they not sinned)? Who would deny this? For, in our own day, we do not think it impudent

³⁷ Cf. Augustine, *De correptione et gratia*, 11,27ff.

to call men blessed when we see them leading a righteous and godly life in the hope of future immortality, with no remorse to unsettle their conscience, and readily obtaining the divine mercy for the sins which, in their infirmity, they commit. Yet these, though certain of their reward if they persevere, are not certain that they will persevere. For what man can know that he will persevere to the end in the practice and increase of righteousness, unless he has been made certain by some revelation from Him Who, in His just and secret judgment, while He deceives no one, does not instruct all men in this matter? Accordingly, as far as the enjoyment of present good is concerned, the first man in Paradise was more blessed than any righteous man in this condition of mortal infirmity. As regards the hope of future good, however, every man who not merely believes, but knows as a certain truth, that he is to enjoy without end the most high God in the company of angels and free from every evil: this man, no matter what bodily torments afflict him, is more blessed than him who, even in the great happiness of Paradise, was uncertain of his fate.

13 Whether all the angels were so created in one common state of felicity that those who fell did not know that they would fall, and those who remained steadfast received an assurance of their own perseverance after the ruin of the fallen

From all this, anyone will now see without difficulty that the blessedness which an intellectual being desires as its proper goal will result from a conjunction of two things: namely, the enjoyment without interruption of the immutable Good which is God; and the certain knowledge, free from all doubt and error, that it will remain in the same enjoyment for ever. That the angels of light have such blessedness we piously believe;³⁸ but reason leads us to believe that the fallen angels, who were deprived of that light by their own depravity, did not enjoy this blessedness even before they sinned. Yet if their life was of any duration before they sinned, we must surely believe that they enjoyed some measure of blessedness, even though it did not include knowledge of the future.

³⁸ Cf. *De gen. ad lit.*, 11,22; 30.

But it seems hard to believe that, when the angels were made, some were given no foreknowledge of either their perseverance or their fall, whereas others knew with a most certain assurance that their blessedness would be eternal. It is hard to believe that they were not all created equal in felicity at the beginning, and remained so until those who are now evil fell away from the light of goodness by their own will. Beyond doubt, however, it is even harder to believe that the holy angels are now uncertain of their eternal blessedness, and do not know regarding themselves what we have been able to learn regarding them from the Holy Scriptures. For what catholic Christian does not know that, just as the devil will never return to the fellowship of the good angels, so no new devil will ever in the future arise among them? In the Gospel, the Truth promises the saints and the faithful that they will be equal to the angels of God;³⁹ and to them it is also promised that they will 'go away into life eternal'.⁴⁰ But if we are certain that we are never to fall away from immortal happiness, while the angels are not certain of this, then we shall be greater than they are, and not their equals. But as the Truth never deceives, and as we shall be their equals, then they themselves must be certain of their eternal felicity. And because the angels who were to fall were not certain of this – because they had no eternal felicity to be certain of, since it was to come to an end – it follows either that the angels were unequal, or that, if they were equal, the good angels received certain knowledge of the eternity of their happiness only after the ruin of the others.

Perhaps, however, someone will say that what the Lord said of the devil in the Gospel – 'He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth'⁴¹ – is to be understood to mean not only that he was a murderer from the beginning of the human race, when man, whom he could not kill by his deceit, was made, but also that he did not abide in the truth from the time of his own beginning: that he was therefore never blessed with the holy angels; that he refused to be subject to his Creator; that he proudly rejoiced as if in a power peculiar to himself; and that, in this, he was both deceived and deceiving. For no one can evade the might of the Almighty; and he who refuses to hold fast in godliness to what truly

³⁹ Matt. 22,30.

⁴⁰ Matt. 25,46.

⁴¹ John 8,44.

is deludes himself in his pride and mocks himself with that which is not. We may indeed understand the blessed apostle John in this way, when he says that 'The devil sinneth from the beginning':⁴² that is, from the time of his own creation he refused the righteousness that only a will subdued to God in piety can possess.

Whoever acquiesces in this view does not thereby agree with the heretical Manichaeans, or with any other pestilential sect believing, as the Manichaeans do, that the devil has received an evil nature peculiar to himself from some adverse first cause. These persons are made so foolish by their own vanity that, though they agree with us in ascribing authority to the words of the evangelists, they fail to notice that the Lord did not say that the truth was absent from the devil's nature. Rather, He said that 'he abode not in the truth'. By this, He wished us to understand that the devil had fallen away from the truth in which, had he remained steadfast, he would have been made a partaker, and so would have remained in blessedness with the holy angels.

14 What is meant when it is said of the devil that he did not abide in the truth 'because the truth is not in him'

Moreover, as if we had asked, the Lord then gave us the reason why the devil did not abide in the truth. He said, 'because the truth is not in him'; for it would be in him had he abided in it. The mode of speech here employed is, however, an unusual one. For when it is said that 'He abode not in the truth, because the truth is not in him', this seems to mean that the truth's not being in him is the cause of his not abiding in it; whereas, on the contrary, his not abiding in the truth is the cause of its not being in him. The same form of speech occurs also in the psalm: 'I have called upon Thee, for Thou hast heard me, O God',⁴³ where it would seem that the psalmist should have said, 'Thou hast heard me, O God, for I have called upon Thee.' But when he had said, 'I have called', then, as if someone had asked him to prove that he had called, he uses the effect – that is, God's answering his call – to prove his own act. It

⁴² 1 John 3,8.

⁴³ Psalm 17,6.

is as if he had said, The proof that I have prayed is that Thou hast heard me.

15 How we are to understand the words, 'The devil sinneth from the beginning'

Again, as to what John says of the devil, 'The devil sinneth from the beginning', those who take this to mean that the devil is sinful by nature do not correctly understand it. For if sin is natural, there is no such thing as sin.⁴⁴ How, then, do these persons reply to the testimony of the prophets? For Isaiah, representing the devil under the figure of the prince of Babylon, says: 'How art thou fallen, O Lucifer, son of the morning!'⁴⁵ Also, Ezekiel says: 'Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering';⁴⁶ and by this we are to understand that the devil was for some time without sin. For, a little later, it is more expressly said: 'Thou wast perfect in thy ways.'⁴⁷ And if no other more fitting interpretation of these verses can be found, then we must also understand this one, 'He abode not in the truth', to mean that the devil was once in the truth, but did not remain in it. Again, from the words, 'The devil sinneth from the beginning', we are not to suppose that he sinned from the beginning of his created existence, but from the beginning of his sin, because it was by his pride that sin first came to be.

There is, moreover, that which is written in the Book of Job, where the devil is the subject of the passage, 'This is the beginning of the Lord's handiwork, which He made to be a sport to His angels.'⁴⁸ With this passage the psalm also seems to agree, where we read: 'There is that dragon which Thou hast made to be a sport therein.'⁴⁹ But we are to understand these verses to mean not that the devil was created from the beginning to be a sport to the angels, but that this punishment was appointed for him after he sinned. His beginning, then, is the Lord's handiwork. For there is no

⁴⁴ Cf. Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, 3, 14, 41.

⁴⁵ Is. 14, 12.

⁴⁶ Ezek. 28, 13.

⁴⁷ Ezek. 28, 15.

⁴⁸ Job 40, 14.

⁴⁹ Psalm 104, 26.

nature, even among the least and lowest of the beasts, which was not wrought by Him from Whom comes all the measure, all the form and all the order without which nothing can be found or conceived to exist. How much more, then, is the angelic creation, which surpasses in dignity all else that He has made, the handiwork of God!

16 Of the grades and differences of created things, estimated in one way according to the measure of utility or, in another, according to rational order

For among those beings which have some measure of existence, and which are distinct from the God by Whom they were made, those which have life are placed above those which do not have life; and those that have the power of generation, or even of desiring it, are placed above those which lack this capacity. And, among living things, the sentient are placed above those which do not have sensation: animals above trees, for instance. And, among the sentient, the intelligent are placed above those which do not have intelligence: men, for example, are above cattle. And, among the intelligent, the immortal, such as the angels, are placed above the mortal, such as men. These are the gradations which exist in the order of nature. But there are also various standards of value arising out of the use to which we put this thing or that; and, for this reason, we often prefer some things which lack sensation to some which have sensation. So strong is this preference, indeed, that we would abolish the latter from nature altogether if we could, whether out of ignorance of the place that they hold in nature, or, knowing this, still putting our own convenience first. Who, for example, would not rather have bread in his house than mice, or gold than fleas? But why should we wonder at this? For even in the estimation of men themselves, whose nature is certainly very great in dignity, a horse is often worth more than a slave, or a jewel than a maid-servant.

So far as freedom of judgment is concerned, then, the reason of the thoughtful man is far different from the necessity of one who is in need, or the desire of the pleasure-seeker. For reason considers what value a thing has in itself, as part of the order of nature, whereas necessity considers how to obtain what will meet its need. Reason considers what appears to be true according to the light of

the mind, whereas pleasure looks for whatever agreeable thing will gratify the body's senses. In the case of rational natures, however, a good will and a rightly ordered love have, as it were, such great weight that, even though angels rank above men in the natural order, good men are nonetheless placed above the wicked angels according to the law of righteousness.

17 That the blemish of wickedness is not natural,
but contrary to nature; and that the cause of sin is
not the Creator, but the will

We are, then, rightly to understand the words, 'This is the beginning of the Lord's handiwork' to refer to the nature of the devil and not to his wickedness. For there is no doubt that wickedness can be a blemish or flaw only in a nature that was not previously flawed. Vice, too, is so far contrary to nature that it can only damage nature. *Withdrawal from God, therefore, would not be a vice other than in a creature whose proper nature it is to abide with God; and so even a wicked will strongly testifies to the goodness of the nature.* But just as God is the supreme Creator of good natures, so also is He the most just Ruler of evil wills. And so, just as the wicked make ill use of good natures, so does God make good use even of wicked wills. Accordingly, He caused the devil – whom He created good, but who became wicked by his own will – to be brought low and to become the sport of His angels: that is, God caused the temptations of the devil to bring good to the saints whom the devil wishes to harm by them. And because God, when He created the devil, certainly was not ignorant of the devil's future malignity, and foresaw the good which He Himself would bring out of his evil, the psalm therefore says: 'There is that dragon whom Thou has made to be a sport therein.' This is so that we may understand that, even while God in His goodness created the devil good, He had nonetheless already foreseen that he would become wicked, and prepared the use that He would then make of him.

18 Of the beauty of the universe, which, by the
disposition of God, is made all the more magnificent
by the opposition of contraries

For God would never have created any men, much less any angels, whose future wickedness He foreknew, unless He had equally

known to what uses He could put them on behalf of the good, thereby adorning the course of the ages like a most beautiful poem set off with antitheses. For what are called antitheses are among the most elegant figures of speech. They might be called in Latin 'oppositions' or, to speak more accurately, 'contrapositions';⁵⁰ but such terms are not a usual feature of our vocabulary, though Latin speech, and, indeed, the languages of all nations, make use of the same ornaments of style. In the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul himself gives a graceful display of antithesis, in that place where he says:

By the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened and not killed; as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.⁵¹

Just as the opposition of contraries bestows beauty upon language, then, so is the beauty of this world enhanced by the opposition of contraries, composed, as it were, by an eloquence not of words, but of things. This is quite clearly explained in the Book of Ecclesiasticus, in the following way: 'Good is set against evil, and life against death: so is the sinner against the godly. So look upon all the works of the Most High, and these are two and two, one against another.'⁵²

19 How it seems that we are to understand what is written, that 'God divided the light from the darkness'

The obscurity of the divine word is beneficial in this respect: that it causes many views of the truth to appear and to be brought into the light of knowledge, as one reader understands a passage in one way and another in another. Any interpretation of an obscure passage should, however, be confirmed by the testimony of manifest facts or by other passages where the meaning is not in the least

⁵⁰ Cf. Quintilian, *Inst. orat.*, 9.381ff.

⁵¹ 2 Cor. 6.7ff.

⁵² Eccles. 33.14f.

open to doubt. In this way we shall, by the investigation of several views, either arrive at the meaning intended by whoever wrote the passage, or, failing this, the examination of a profoundly obscure passage will lead to the statement of a number of other truths.

Now it does not seem to me an absurd interpretation of God's works if we understand that the angels were created when that first light was made, and that the separation of the holy and the unclean angels was made when, as is said, 'God divided the light from the darkness; and God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night.'⁵³ For only He could make this division, Who could also foreknow before they fell that they would fall, and that, being deprived of the light of truth, they would remain in the darkness of pride.

As regards 'day' and 'night' in the sense of the terms most usually known to us, He commanded those lights of heaven that are most commonly before our senses to divide light from darkness. He said: 'Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven, to divide the day from the night.' And shortly thereafter Scripture says, 'And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness.'⁵⁴ But as regards that 'light' which is the holy company of the angels, intelligibly refulgent with the illumination of truth, and that opposite 'darkness' which designates the most loathsome minds of those wicked angels who are turned away from the light of righteousness: only God Himself could divide these from one another; for the future evil of the wicked angels – not a defect of their nature, but of their will – could not be hidden from Him or unknown to Him.

20 Of what is said after the separation of light from darkness: 'And God saw the light that it was good'

Next, we must not pass over in silence the fact that when God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light, it was at once added, 'And

⁵³ Gen. 1,4f.

⁵⁴ Gen. 1,14ff.

God saw the light that it was good.' No such words appear after He divided the light from the darkness and called the light Day and the darkness Night; and this is so that He should not seem to declare Himself just as much pleased with such darkness as with the light. But where the darkness mentioned was of the kind not subject to blame – that is, when it was divided by the lights of heaven from this light which our eyes perceive – the words 'And God saw that it was good' are inserted, though not before the division, but after it. Scripture says: 'And God set them in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.' For both pleased Him, because both were without sin. But where God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light; and the Scripture continues, 'and God saw the light that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness: and God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night': it is not in this place added, 'And God saw that it was good', lest both should be called good although one of them was evil, not by nature, but by its own fault. Here, then, only the light was pleasing to the Creator, while the angelic darkness, though it had been ordained by Him, was nonetheless not approved by Him.

21 Of the eternal and immutable knowledge and will
of God, whereby everything created by Him always
pleased Him both before it was made and after it
was made

How are we to understand what is said in every case, that 'God saw that it was good', other than as an approbation of a work made according to that plan which is the wisdom of God? For God certainly did not learn that His work was good only after it was made.⁵⁵ On the contrary, nothing would have been made had it not been first known by Him to be good. When, therefore, He 'sees' that a thing is good which, had He not seen it before it was made, would never have been made at all, it is clear that He is teaching us, and not discovering for Himself, that it is good. Plato, indeed, was more bold, and said that, when the whole world was completed, God was

⁵⁵ Cf. *De gen. contra Man.*, 1,13.

filled with joy.⁵⁶ But Plato was here not so foolish as to suppose that God was made more blessed by the newness of His creation.⁵⁷ Rather, he wished to show in this way that the work pleased its Maker just as much when He had completed it as it had when He was contemplating it. For the knowledge of God does not in any way vary: He does not know in different ways things which are not yet, things which are now, and things which are no longer. For He does not, as we do, look forward to what is to come, at what is present, or backward upon what is past. On the contrary, He views things in quite another fashion than we do, and in a way far and greatly different from our manner of thought. For His thought does not change as it passes from one thing to another, but beholds all things with absolute immutability. Of those things which occur temporally, the future, indeed, is not yet, the present is now, and the past is no longer; but all of these are comprehended by Him in His stable and eternal presence. Neither does He see in one way with the eye and in another with the mind, for He does not consist of mind and body. Nor does what He knows now differ from what He always has known and always will know; for those three kinds of time which we call past, present and future, though they affect our knowledge, do not change that of Him 'with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning'.⁵⁸

Neither does He pass from thought to thought in what He contemplates; for in His incorporeal vision all things which He knows are simultaneously present. For just as He moves all temporal things without any temporal motion of His own, so does He know all things with a knowledge that does not occupy time. And therefore He saw that what He had made was good, when He saw that it was good to make it. And when He saw it made, He did not then have a twofold knowledge; nor was His knowledge of it in any way increased, as if He had had less knowledge of it before He made it than when He saw it. For He would not be the perfect Creator that He is, if His knowledge were not so perfect as to receive no addition from His works.

Therefore, if the intention of Scripture had been only to tell us Who made the light, it would have been enough to say, 'God made

⁵⁶ *Tim.*, 37C.

⁵⁷ Cf. Plotinus, *Enn.*, 5, 8, 8.

⁵⁸ James 1, 17.

the light.' And if it had wished us to know not only Who made the light, but by what means it had been made, it would have been enough to announce, 'And God said, Let there be light, and there was light', that we might know not only that God made the light, but that He made it by His Word. But because it was fitting that three great truths regarding the creation should be intimated to us – that is, Who made it, by what means, and why – Scripture says: 'God said, Let there be light, and there was light. And God saw the light that it was good.' If, therefore, we ask Who made it, the answer is 'God'. If we ask by what means He made it, the answer is that He said 'Let it be', and it was. And if we ask why He made it, the answer is because 'it was good'.

Nor is there any Maker more excellent than God, nor any skill more efficacious than the Word of God, nor any cause better than that good might be created by the good God. Plato himself said that the most righteous reason for the creation of the world was that good works might be made by a good God.⁵⁹ Perhaps he had read this verse, or had learned of these things from those who had read it; or he may, by the acuteness of his own intellect, have seen the invisible things of God, understanding them 'by the things that are made';⁶⁰ or, again, he may have learned of these things from others who had seen them.⁶¹

22 Of those who are displeased by certain aspects of the whole scheme of things which the good Creator has created well, and who think that there is some natural evil

When this cause of a good creation – that is, the goodness of God: when this cause, I say, which is so righteous and fitting is diligently considered and contemplated with piety, it brings to an end all the controversies of those who enquire into the origin of the world. There are certain heretics, however, who do not acknowledge this; and this is because there are many things, such as fire, cold, wild beasts, and so forth, which are not compatible

⁵⁹ *Tim.*, 29D–30A.

⁶⁰ *Rom.* 1, 20.

⁶¹ Cf. *Bk VIII*, 11.

with, and which injure, the needy and frail mortality of our flesh, which now comes to us under just punishment. These persons do not notice how splendid such things are in their own places and natures, and with what beautiful order they are disposed, and how much they contribute, in proportion to their own share of beauty, to the universe as a whole, as to a commonwealth. Nor do they see how these things contribute to our own wellbeing when we employ them with a knowledge of their proper uses. Thus, even poisons, which are harmful if used ill, become wholesome and curative when proper use is made of them; whereas, on the other hand, those things which delight us, such as food and drink and the sun's light, are known to be harmful if used immoderately or inopportunately.

In this way, then, divine providence admonishes us not to condemn things thoughtlessly, but rather to inquire with diligence into the utility of things. Also, where our own intellect or weakness is to blame for our lack of knowledge, we should believe that a utility exists even though it is hidden, as we have found to be true of other things that we have discovered only with difficulty. This concealment of utility is a means of either exercising our humility or overcoming our pride. For there is nothing at all which is evil by nature, and 'evil' is a name for nothing other than the absence of good.

But in the scale of value extending from things earthly to things heavenly, from things visible to things invisible, there are some good things which are better than others; and these things were made unequal in this way so that they might all exist as distinct individuals. Also, God is a great worker in great things; but this is not to say that He is less so in little things.⁶² Such little things are, after all, to be measured not by their own magnitude, for they have none, but by the wisdom of the Creator Who made them. Take, for example, the visible appearance of a man. Suppose we shave off one eyebrow: how nearly nothing is taken from the body, but how much from its beauty! For beauty is not constituted by size, but by the balance and proportion of the parts.

We do not greatly wonder at it, however, that there are persons who, believing that some evil nature has been generated and propagated by a kind of adverse first cause of its own, refuse to accept

⁶² Cf. *De gen ad lit.*, 3, 14, 22.

that the reason for the creation was so that a good God might create good things. For they believe that God was driven to this great task of creation by the extreme necessity of repulsing the evil force that rebelled against Him, and that He mingled His good nature with this evil force in order to restrain and conquer it. They believe also that His nature is therefore now shamefully defiled and most cruelly captured and oppressed; that He labours greatly to cleanse and redeem it; that with all His efforts He is not wholly able to do so; but that the part of it which could not be cleansed from its defilement will in time to come be the prison and shackle of the conquered and imprisoned foe. The Manichaeans would not drive – or, rather, rave – like this if they believed the nature of God to be what it is: immutable, wholly incorruptible, and unable to be harmed by anything. Nor would they do so if they held, as wholesome Christian belief requires, that the soul which can be changed for the worse by its own will, and be corrupted by sin, and thus deprived of the light of eternal truth, is not part of God, nor of the same nature as God, but is a thing created by Him and far different from its Creator.

23 Of the error for which the doctrine of Origen is condemned

It is, however, much more to be wondered at that even among those who believe, as we do, that there is only one Source of all things, and that no nature which is not God can exist unless it comes from that Source, there are some who have refused to accept with good and simple faith the good and simple reason for the world's creation: namely, that a good God might create good things which, because different from God, would be inferior to God, yet which would nonetheless be good precisely because created by a good God. Rather, they say that souls, though not, indeed, parts of God, but created by Him, sinned by forsaking their Creator; that by their various sins they merited different degrees of banishment as between heaven and earth, and different bodies as their prisons;⁶³ and that the reason for this world and

⁶³ Cf. Epiphanius, *Adv. haer.*, 44.

its creation is therefore not the production of good things, but the restraint of evil ones.

Origen is justly to be blamed in this respect. For in the books which he calls *Peri Archon*, that is, *On First Principles*, he believes and writes these things.⁶⁴ But I am more surprised than I can say that a man so learned and well versed in ecclesiastical literature should not have noticed, first, how contrary this is to that scriptural account of such great authority which, in describing all the works of God, always adds, 'And God saw that it was good', and which, when all those works were completed, inserts the words, 'And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.' For we are here clearly given to understand that there was no other cause of the world's creation than that good things should be made by a good God. If no one in this world had sinned, the world would have been adorned and filled with natures wholly good. Also, even though sin now exists, all things are not on that account full of sin; for by far the greater number of celestial beings are good, and preserve the proper order of their nature. And the sinful will, though it refused to preserve the order of its own nature, did not on that account escape the laws of the just God Who orders all things for good. For just as a picture is enhanced by the proper placing within it of dark colours, so, to those able to discern it, the beauty of the universe is enhanced even by sinners, though, considered in themselves, theirs is a sorry deformity.

Second, Origen and all who think as he does ought to have seen the following difficulty. It is their opinion that the world was created so that souls might receive bodies suited to the degree of their sin, in which they should be shut up as in houses of correction. If this were true, however, those who sinned less grievously would receive higher and lighter bodies, whereas those who sinned more grossly and gravely would receive lower and heavier ones; and so it would follow that the demons, than whom nothing is worse, ought, far more than wicked men, to have earthly bodies, than which nothing is lower and heavier. In reality, however, so that we might understand that the merits of souls are not to be estimated by the qualities of bodies, the worst demon possesses an aerial body,

⁶⁴ *De princ.*, 1,6.

whereas man – wicked, certainly, but with a wickedness far smaller and lighter than the malice of the demons – received a body of clay even before he sinned.

Moreover, what could be more foolish than to say that the sun is the only sun in the only world, not because God, its Creator, intended to adorn the realm of corporeal things with beauty, or even to benefit it, but simply because a single soul had chanced to sin in a way deserving of imprisonment in such a body as it is? On this principle, if it had so happened that not one but two, or, indeed, not two, but ten or a hundred had committed similar sins of equal gravity, then this world would have a hundred suns. That this is not so is due, they think, not to the marvellous provision of the Creator in securing the wellbeing and adornment of corporeal things, but rather to the fact that one soul only had committed an amount of sin so precise as to deserve such a body. Clearly, those who believe such things should concern themselves not with the straying of souls, of which they know not what they say, but with themselves, in straying so very far from the truth.

When, therefore, the three questions which I presented above – Who made it? By what means did He make it? and Why did He make it? – are asked in the case of any creature whatsoever, we reply: God made it, by means of the Word, and so that it might be good. It may be that we have here a profound and mystic intimation of the Trinity: that is, of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. On the other hand, some consideration may arise which forbids such an interpretation of this passage of Scripture.⁶⁵ This question would require a great deal of discussion; but we cannot be expected to explain everything in one volume.

24 Of the divine Trinity, which has distributed everywhere in Its works symbolic references to Itself

We believe and hold, and faithfully preach, that the Father begat the Word, that is, Wisdom, by Which all things were made: His only begotten Son, one as He is one, eternal as He is eternal, supremely good as He is equally good. We believe also that the Holy Spirit is simultaneously the Spirit of the Father and the Son,

⁶⁵ I.e. of Gen. 1,31.

and is Himself one in substance and co-eternal with both. Moreover, this whole is a Trinity by reason of the individuality of its persons, and one God by reason of their indivisible divinity, just as it is one Almighty by reason of their indivisible omnipotence. When a question is asked concerning the individual persons, the reply must be that each is God and each is Almighty; but when we speak of all of them together, it is said not that there are three Gods or three Almighties, but one God Almighty. Such is the inseparable unity of the three persons, which God has willed us to proclaim in this way.

But whether the Holy Spirit of the good Father and the good Son can rightly be called the goodness of both because He is common to both: this is a question on which I do not venture to give a hasty opinion. I shall, however, find it easier to assert with confidence that He is the holiness of both, not as if He were merely a divine attribute, but as a substantial person of the Trinity in Himself. I am led to accept this view as more probable because, though the Father is a spirit and the Son is a spirit, and the Father is holy and the Son holy, the third person is nonetheless distinctively called the Holy Spirit, as being a substantial holiness consubstantial with the other two.

But if the divine goodness is nothing other than holiness, then certainly it is a careful use of reason, and not a presumptuous boldness, to see a suggestion of the Trinity expressed in the works of God as if by a veiled mode of speech: a mode intended to develop our understanding when we ask, of anything whatsoever that God has created, Who made it? By what means did He make it? and, Why did He make it? For it is the Father of the Word Who said, Let it be. And that which was made when He spoke was beyond doubt made by means of the Word. Again, when it is said, 'God saw that it was good', it is thereby sufficiently signified that God made what He made not from any necessity, not because He had need of any benefit, but simply from His own goodness: that is, so that it might be good. And this was said after the created thing had been made, so that there might be no doubt that its existence was in harmony with the goodness for the sake of which it was made. And if this goodness is rightly understood to be the Holy Spirit, then the whole Trinity is revealed to us in the works of God. In this

Trinity is the origin, the instruction and the blessedness of the holy City which is on high, among the holy angels. For if we ask, Whence comes it? God founded it; or Whence comes its wisdom? God enlightened it; or Where lies its happiness? In the enjoyment of God. It has its form by subsisting in Him; its enlightenment by contemplating Him; its joy by abiding in Him. It is; it sees; it loves. Its strength is in the eternity of God; its light is in God's truth; in God's goodness is its joy.

25 Of the division into three parts of the whole discipline of philosophy

So far as one is given to understand, it is for the same reason that the philosophers have wished to divide their discipline into three parts (or, rather, were enabled to see that there is such a threefold division; for they did not invent it, but only discovered it): of which one part is called physical, another logical and the third ethical. In the writings of many authors, these divisions are called by the Latin terms natural, rational and moral philosophy, as I have mentioned briefly in the eighth book.⁶⁶

It does not follow from this threefold division that these philosophers had any notion of a Trinity in God. Plato, however, is said to have been the first to discover and recommend this division, and he saw that only God could be the author of nature, the giver of intelligence and the inspirer of the love by which life is made good and blessed. Also, it is certain that, though opinions differ as to the nature of things, and the method of investigating truth, and the good to which we ought to refer all that we do, it is to these three great and general questions that all the efforts of the philosophers are devoted. Thus, though there is much disagreement as to which view each man ought to take in respect of any of these questions, no one doubts that nature has some cause, science some method, and life some purpose.

Also, there are three things which must be present in any man if he is to execute a work of art: natural aptitude, education and practice. Natural aptitude is to be judged by capacity, education by knowledge, and practice by its fruit. I do not overlook

⁶⁶ Bk viii, 4ff.

the fact that, properly speaking, fruit is what one enjoys, whereas a practice is something of which one makes use. The difference between the two seems to be this: that we are said to enjoy that which delights us in itself and without reference to any other end, whereas we make use of something for the sake of some end which lies beyond it. Thus, temporal things are to be used rather than enjoyed, so that we may deserve to enjoy eternal things: not like those perverse men who wish to enjoy money and use God, not spending money for God's sake, but worshipping God for money's sake. Nonetheless, in speech as it is customarily used, we both use fruits and enjoy practices. For we quite properly speak of the 'fruits' of the field, even though these are temporal things of which we all make use.

Speaking in this ordinary sense, then, there are three things to be considered in a man: natural aptitude, education and practice. In these, as I have said, the philosophers have discovered the threefold division of that discipline by which a blessed life is achieved; the natural division having respect to natural aptitude, the rational to education, and the moral to practice. If, therefore, we were the authors of our own natures, we should have generated our own knowledge also, and should not require to reach it by education: that is, by learning it from elsewhere. Our love, too, going forth from ourselves and returning to ourselves, would be enough to make our lives blessed, and would need to enjoy no other good. But now, since our nature has God as the author of its being, we must beyond doubt have Him as our teacher, that we may be truly wise; and Him also to bestow spiritual sweetness upon us, that we may be blessed indeed.

26 Of the image of the supreme Trinity which is to some extent found in human nature even before man has attained blessedness

And we indeed recognise in ourselves the image of God: that is, of the supreme Trinity. This image is not equal to God. Indeed, it is very far removed from Him; for it is neither co-eternal with Him, nor, to express the whole matter briefly, is it of the same

substance as God. It is, however, nearer to God in nature than anything else made by Him, even though it still requires to be reformed and perfected in order to be a still closer likeness. For we exist, and we know that we exist, and we take delight in our existence and our knowledge of it. Moreover, in respect of these three things of which I speak, no falsehood which only resembles the truth troubles us. For we do not make contact with these things by means of some bodily sense, as we do in the case of things extrinsic to ourselves. We perceive colours, for example, by seeing, sounds by hearing, smells by smelling, tastes by tasting, hard and soft objects by touching; and in all these cases it is the images resembling the sensible objects, but not the corporeal objects themselves, which we perceive in the mind and retain in the memory, and which excite us to desire the objects. It is, however, without any delusive representation of images or phantasms that I am wholly certain that I exist, and that I know this fact and love it.

So far as these truths are concerned, I do not at all fear the arguments of the Academics when they say, What if you are mistaken? For if I am mistaken, I exist. He who does not exist clearly cannot be mistaken; and so, if I am mistaken, then, by the same token, I exist. And since, if I am mistaken, it is certain that I exist, how can I be mistaken in supposing that I exist? Since, therefore, I would have to exist even if I were mistaken, it is beyond doubt that I am not mistaken in knowing that I exist. And, consequently, neither am I mistaken in knowing that I know. For, just as I know that I exist, so also do I know that I know. And when I love these two things, I add my love to them as a third thing, no smaller in esteem than the things that I know. Nor am I mistaken in saying that I love, for I am not mistaken in knowing that I love the things that I love. Even if those things were false, it would still be true that I loved false things; for how could I be rightly reproached for loving false things, and rightly forbidden to do so, if it were false that I loved them? Since they are true and certain, however, who doubts that, when they are loved, the love of them is itself true and certain? Moreover, just as there is no one who does not wish to be happy, so is there no one who does not wish to exist; for how can anyone be happy if he is nothing?

27 Of existence, and the knowledge of it, and the love of both

For some natural reason, indeed, mere existence is so pleasant that, for this very reason, even those who are miserable do not wish to die. When they are aware of being miserable, they wish to have the causes of their misery removed from them, but they do not themselves wish to be removed from those causes. Consider even those who seem to themselves to be completely miserable, and who clearly are so; or those who are judged miserable by the wise, because of their folly; or those who are judged miserable because they are poor and destitute by those who consider themselves happy because they are not. Suppose someone were to grant all these men an immortality in which their misery should never end, but with the condition that, if they did not wish to remain forever in this same misery, they might perish entirely and have no existence of any kind. Would they not surely jump for joy, and choose to remain miserable forever rather than not exist at all? The well-known feeling of such men testifies to this. For when they fear to die, and would rather live in wretchedness than end it by death, does not this show clearly enough how nature flees non-existence? Again, this is why, when they know that they are to die, they desire as a great blessing that they may be granted the mercy of living a little longer in the same misery, and dying a little later. They show beyond doubt, therefore, with what gratitude they would accept even an immortality which brought with it no end to their wretchedness.

What? Do not even all the irrational animals, to whom the power of thought is not given, from immense dragons down to the smallest worms, all show that they desire to exist, and therefore avoid death by every movement that they can make? What? Do not the very trees and bushes, even though they cannot avoid destruction by means of perceptible movements, all seek to preserve their existence in their own fashion, by putting down roots into the earth so that they may draw nourishment from it and put forth healthy branches into the air? Finally, even those corporeal objects which have neither sensation nor any seed of life nonetheless either spring upwards or sink downwards or are balanced in the middle, so that they may preserve their existence

in that place where they are most able to exist according to their nature.

Again, how greatly human nature loves knowledge, and how unwilling it is to be mistaken, can be understood from the fact that everyone prefers to be unhappy and sane rather than joyful and mad. And this great and wonderful instinct for knowledge is found in no mortal creatures apart from man. For, though some animals are able to regard this world's light with far sharper eyes than we have, they cannot attain to that incorporeal light with which our mind is somehow irradiated, so that we can judge all things rightly. For the more we receive of such light, the more able are we to judge.

Nevertheless, although they do not have knowledge, there is certainly present in non-rational animals something which resembles knowledge; whereas other material things are called sensible, not because they have senses, but because they are the objects of our senses. In the case of trees, their nourishment and generation have some resemblance to sensation. Yet, though they and all corporeal things have causes which lie hidden in their nature, they do display their forms, which give shape to the visible structure of our world, for perception by our senses; and so it seems that, even though they themselves cannot know, they nonetheless wish to be known. But we perceive these things by our bodily senses in such a way that we do not judge them by means of those senses. For we have another, and far nobler, sense, belonging to the inner man, by which we perceive what things are just and what unjust: just by virtue of an intelligible idea, unjust by the lack of it. This sense is assisted in its office neither by the pupil of the eye, nor by the orifice of the ear, nor by the passages of the nostrils, nor by the taste of the palate, nor by any bodily touch. By it, I am certain both that I exist, and that I know it; and these two certainties I love, and, in the same manner, I am certain that I love them.

28 Whether we ought to love the love itself with which we love our existence and our knowledge of it, so that we may come to resemble more closely the image of the divine Trinity

We have said as much as the scope of this work seems to require concerning these things: that is, concerning our existence and our knowledge of it, and how much they are loved by us, and how some semblance of them is found even in the other things which are below us, though with a difference. But we have not yet spoken of the love with which they are loved, to consider whether this love is itself loved. It is loved, however; and the proof lies in this: that, when men are rightly loved, what is loved in them is love itself. For it is not he who knows what is good who is justly called a good man, but he who loves it. Why, then, do we not see that we love in ourselves the very love with which we love whatever good we love? For there is also a love by which that is loved which ought not to be loved; and this is a love which a man hates in himself if he loves that by which he loves what ought to be loved. For both loves can exist in one man; and it is good for a man that the love by which we live well should grow, and that the other, by which we live ill, should decrease, until the whole of our life is perfectly healed and transformed into good. For if we were cattle, we should love the carnal and sensual life, and this would be our sufficient good; and when it was well with us in respect of it, we should seek nothing else. Again, if we were trees we could not, of course, be moved by the senses to love anything; but we should seem to desire, as it were, that by which we might become more abundantly and bountifully fruitful. If we were stones or waves or wind or flames or anything of that kind, we should, indeed, be without both sensation and life, but we should still not lack a kind of desire for our own proper place and order. For the weight of bodies is, as it were, their love, whether they are carried downwards by gravity or upwards by their lightness. For the body is carried by its weight wherever it is carried, just as the soul is carried by its love.

We, however, are men, created in the image of our Creator, Whose eternity is true and Whose truth is eternal, Whose love

is eternal and true, and Who is Himself the eternal, true and beloved Trinity, in Whom there is neither confusion nor separateness. As we run over all the works which He has miraculously established, let us consider His footprints, as it were, more deeply impressed in one place and more lightly in another, but distinct even in those things which are below us. For such things could not exist in any way, or be contained in any shape, or desire or sustain any order, had they not been made by Him Who supremely is, and Who is supremely wise and supremely good. Contemplating His image in ourselves, therefore, let us, like that younger son of the Gospel, come to ourselves, and arise and return to Him Whom we had forsaken by our sin.⁶⁷ In Him, our being will have no death, our knowledge will have no error, and our love will know no check. In our present state, we believe that we possess these three things – being, knowledge and love – not on the testimony of others, but because we ourselves are aware of their presence, and because we discern them with our own most truthful inner vision. We cannot, however, know of ourselves how long they will continue, or whether they will ever cease, and what will be the outcome of their good or bad use. Hence, we seek the testimony of others, if we do not already have it. But we shall speak more carefully, not here, but later, of the faith which we should beyond doubt place in such testimony.⁶⁸

In this book, then, with God's help, let us proceed, as we have begun, to speak of the City of God, not as a pilgrim in this mortal life, but as forever immortal in heaven. Let us, that is, speak of the holy angels who cleave to God, who have never forsaken Him and who never will. As I have already said, God made a separation at the beginning between these and those others who forsook the light eternal and became darkness.

⁶⁷ Luke 15,11ff.

⁶⁸ Bk xxii,22.

29 Of the knowledge by which the holy angels know the Trinity in its very Godhood, and by which they see the causes of God's works in the design of the Maker, before they see them in His works

Those holy angels learn to know God not by the sound of words, but by the very presence of the immutable Truth: that is, of His only-begotten Word. And they know this Word Himself, and the Father, and the Holy Spirit; and they know that this Trinity is indivisible, and that the persons in it are of one substance, and that there are not three Gods, but one God. And they know all this in such a way that it is better understood by them than we are by ourselves. Again, they know every created being not in itself, but in this better way: that is, in the wisdom of God, as if in the design by which it was created. And, by the same token, they know themselves better in God than in themselves, even though they also know themselves as they are in themselves. For they were made, and are different from Him Who made them. In Him, therefore, they have, as it were, a daylight knowledge, whereas in themselves, they have a twilight knowledge, as we have said before.⁶⁹

For there is a great difference between knowing something in the form according to which it was made, and knowing it as it is in itself. For example, straight lines and accurate geometrical figures are known in one way when conceived by the intellect, and in another when drawn in the dust. Justice, too, is known in one way in the realm of immutable truth, and in another in the mind of the just man. And so it is with all other things: for example, the firmament between the waters above and those beneath, which was called heaven; the gathering together of the waters beneath, and the laying bare of the dry land, and the bringing forth of plants and trees; the establishing of the sun, moon and stars; and the emergence of the animals out of the waters, birds and fish, and the monsters of the deep; and of everything that walks or creeps upon the earth, and of man himself, who excels all that is on the earth. All these things are

⁶⁹ Ch. 7 above.

known in one way by the angels in the Word of God, where they see the immutable and abiding causes and reasons according to which they were made; and in another way in themselves. In the former, they know them more clearly; in the latter, their knowledge is more obscure, and merely of the works themselves rather than their design. Yet, when these works are referred to the praise and veneration of the Creator Himself, it is as if dawn has broken in the minds of those who contemplate them.

30 Of the perfection of the number six, the first number which is the sum of its own parts

It is recorded that these works were completed in six days, the same 'day' being repeated six times, because six is a perfect number.⁷⁰ It is not that any interval of time was necessary to God, as if He could not create all things simultaneously, which would then mark the course of time by the movements appropriate to them. Rather, the number six is used to signify the perfection of God's works. For the number six is the first number which is composed of its own parts: that is, of its sixth, third and half, which are one, two and three, and which make a total of six. In a number considered in this way, those are said to be its parts which divide it exactly, as a half, a third, a quarter, or a fraction with any denominator. Thus, four is, in a sense, a part of nine, but it cannot be called a part in our present sense. One can, however, because it is a ninth; and three can, because it is a third. But these two parts added together – that is, the ninth and the third, or one and three – do not by any means make up the whole sum of nine. So also, in the number ten, four is a part in a sense, but it cannot be called a part in our sense. One can, however, because it is a tenth; and it has a fifth, which is two; and it has a half, which is five. But these three parts, a tenth, a fifth, a half, or one, two and five, added together, do not make ten; for they make eight. On the other hand, the parts of the number twelve, when added together, are greater than the whole. For it has a twelfth, which is one; a sixth, which is two; a quarter, which is three; a third, which is four; and a

⁷⁰ Cf. Augustine, *De gen ad lit.*, 4,2ff, 4,37; *De Trin.*, 4,7.

half, which is six. But one, two, three, four and six make not twelve, but more: to wit, sixteen. I have thought it appropriate to call these things briefly to mind here in order to demonstrate the perfection of the number six, which is, as I have said, the first number to be exactly made up of the sum of its parts; and in this number of days God finished His work. We must not overlook the science of number, therefore, which, in many passages of Holy Scripture, is found to be of great value to the diligent student. Not without reason is it said in praise of God, "Thou has ordered all things in number, and measure, and weight."⁷¹

31 Of the seventh day, on which completeness and rest are celebrated

On the seventh day – that is, on the seventh repetition of the same day; for the number seven is also perfect, though for a different reason – God's rest is introduced, and, for this reason, we first hear that this day is hallowed. God, then, did not wish to hallow this day by any of His works, but by His rest. This day has no evening, because God's rest is not a created thing. It is not known in one way in the Word of God, and in another as it is in itself; and so it does not give rise to a twofold knowledge: to, as it were, a daylight knowledge and a twilight knowledge.

Certainly, much could be said concerning the perfection of the number seven; but this book is already too long, and I shall seem, I fear, to be taking every opportunity to display my little bit of knowledge with more vanity than profit. I must, therefore, speak with moderation and seriousness, lest, in saying too much of 'number', I be thought to neglect 'weight' and 'measure'. Suffice it to say, then, that three is the first whole number that is odd, four the first that is even, and that seven is composed of these two. For this reason, it is often used to indicate a universality, as in the verse: 'A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again.'⁷² What is meant here is that, no matter how many times he may fall, he will not perish (although this is meant to be understood not of sins, but of those tribulations which conduce to humility). Again, 'Seven times

⁷¹ *Wisd.* 11,21; cf. *Bk* xv,20; xvii,4; xx,5; 7.

⁷² *Prov.* 24,16.

a day will I praise thee'⁷³ is elsewhere expressed in a different way as, 'I will bless the Lord at all times.'⁷⁴ And many such instances are found in the divine authorities, in which, as I have said, the number seven is commonly used to indicate a universality of application. For this reason, the same number is often used to signify the Holy Spirit,⁷⁵ of Whom the Lord says, 'He will guide you into all truth.'⁷⁶ In this number is God's rest, the rest that we find in Him. For rest is in the whole, that is, in perfect fullness, while in the part there is toil. This is why we toil for as long as we know only in part; 'but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away'.⁷⁷ Thus it is that we toil even when we search into the Scriptures themselves. But the holy angels, for whose fellowship and assembly we sigh during this most toilsome pilgrimage, have perfect facility of knowledge and felicity of rest; for they already possess their eternal home. It is without difficulty that they help us; for the movements of spirits, being pure and free, are not toilsome.

32 Of the opinion of those who wish to say that the angels were created before the world

It may be, however, that someone will contend with us here and say that the holy angels are not meant when it is written, 'Let there be light, and there was light.' Perhaps he will believe or teach that some corporeal light was first made then, but that the angels were made not only before the firmament between the waters was created and called 'heaven', but also before the time spoken of in the words, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' Perhaps he will suppose that the words 'In the beginning' do not mean that nothing had yet been made – for the angels had already been made – but that God made all things 'in His Wisdom' or by His Word, Who is called 'the Beginning' in Scripture. For example, in the Gospel, when the Jews asked Him who He was, He Himself replied

⁷³ Psalm 119, 164.

⁷⁴ Psalm 34, 1.

⁷⁵ Cf. Is., 11, 2; Augustine, *Quaest. in Hept.*, 2, 107; *Serm.*, 8, 13.

⁷⁶ John 16, 13.

⁷⁷ 1 Cor. 13, 9f.

that He was 'the Beginning'.⁷⁸ I shall not say anything against this view, chiefly because it gives me great delight to see the Trinity celebrated at the very beginning of the holy Book of Genesis. For, having said, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth', by which we may understand that the Father made them in the Son (as the psalm attests, where we read, 'How manifold are Thy works, O Lord! in Wisdom hast Thou made them all'),⁷⁹ a little afterwards Scripture most aptly makes mention of the Holy Spirit also. For we are told what kind of earth God first made, or what the mass or matter was which God had provided, under the name of 'heaven and earth', for the future construction of the world; and this is described in the additional words, 'And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.' Then, in order to complete the account of the Trinity, it says, 'And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.'

Let each interpret these words as he will, then. For they are so profound that they can give rise to many different opinions which are not at odds with the rule of faith; and this is a challenge to the intellects of those who read them. Let no one doubt, however, that the holy angels in their sublime abodes, though not, indeed, co-eternal with God, are nonetheless secure and certain of their eternal and true felicity. It is to their fellowship that the Lord teaches that His little ones belong. Not only does He say, 'They shall be equal to the angels of God',⁸⁰ but He also shows what manner of contemplation the angels themselves enjoy, when He says: 'Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.'⁸¹

33 Of the two different and disparate companies of angels, which it is not inappropriate to understand as being signified by the names light and darkness

But certain angels sinned, and were thrust down to the lowest depths of this world, where they are, as it were, imprisoned until

⁷⁸ John 8,25; cf. Bk x,24 and n. 84.

⁷⁹ Psalm 104,24.

⁸⁰ Matt. 22,30.

⁸¹ Matt. 18,10.

their final damnation on the day of judgment. The apostle Peter shows this most clearly, saying that 'God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment.'⁸² Who, then, can doubt that God, either in foreknowledge or in act, made a division between these and the rest? And who will deny that the rest are justly called 'light'? For even we, who, as yet, live by faith, who hope for, but do not yet enjoy, equality with them, are already called 'light' by the apostle: 'For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.'⁸³ As for the apostate angels, however: all who understand or believe them to be worse than unbelieving men will certainly know that they are most appropriately named 'darkness'. Thus, even if another kind of light is to be understood in that passage of the Book of Genesis where it is said, 'God said, Let there be light, and there was light'; and even if another kind of darkness is signified where it is written that 'God divided the light from the darkness': we, nonetheless, understand by these words the two companies of angels. The one company enjoys God; the other is swollen with pride. To the one, it is said, 'Praise ye Him, all His angels';⁸⁴ but the prince of the other says, 'All these things will I give Thee if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.'⁸⁵ The one burns with the holy love of God; the other smoulders with the impure love of glory. And since, as it is written, 'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble',⁸⁶ we may say that the one company has its habitation in the heaven of heavens, but the other is cast down from thence, and rages in the lower heaven of the air. The one is tranquil in the light of godliness, the other turbulent with dark desires; the one, at God's command, brings merciful aid and just vengeance, but the other, in its pride, seethes with the desire to subdue and hurt. The one is the minister of God's goodness to the utmost of its will, whereas the other is restrained by God's power from the harm that it longs to do. The good angels make sport of the fallen ones when the latter do good inadvertently by their persecutions; and the fallen angels envy the good when the good gather in their pilgrims.

⁸² 2 Pet. 2,4.

⁸³ Eph. 5,8.

⁸⁴ Psalm 148,2.

⁸⁵ Matt. 4,9.

⁸⁶ James 4,6; 1 Pet. 5,5.

Of these two disparate and contrasted companies of angels, then, the one is both good by nature and righteous in will, whereas the other, though naturally good, is perverse in will. They are declared to be such by other and more explicit testimonies of Divine Scripture; and I believe also that they are signified by the words 'light' and 'darkness' in the Book of Genesis. Even if the writer of the passage in question perhaps had a different meaning in mind, our consideration of his obscurity has not been without its uses. For, even if we have been unable to discover the true intentions of the author of that book, we have nonetheless not departed from the rule of faith, which is sufficiently known to the faithful from other writings of equal authority. For even if it is of the material works of God that our author speaks, these do beyond doubt bear no small resemblance to spiritual things; and so the apostle says, 'Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.'⁸⁷

If, on the other hand, the intention of the author of Genesis was what we have suggested, then our purpose in undertaking this discussion is now perfectly fulfilled. In other words, we may now believe that this man of God, a man of such outstanding and divine wisdom – or, rather, the Spirit of God speaking through him – did not, in recording the works of God, all of which, he says, were perfected by the sixth day, omit to mention the angels. When it is written, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth', the angels are included in the words, 'in the beginning'. This is so either because God made them before anything else; or, as it seems more proper to understand, they are included in the words 'in the beginning' because He made them in the only-begotten Word. Under the names 'heaven' and 'earth', the whole of creation is signified, either divided into the spiritual and the material (which is the more credible explanation), or divided into the two great parts of the world in which all created things are contained. In either case, the creation is first presented as a whole, and then its parts are set forth according to the mystic number of the days.

⁸⁷ 1 Thess. 5,5.

34 Of the belief held by certain persons that the angels are signified by the division of the waters made when the firmament was established; and also of the view held by others that the waters were not created

There are some, however, who suppose that the angelic hosts are in some way signified by the name 'waters', and that this is what is meant by, 'Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters.' On this account, the waters above the firmament are taken to signify the angels, and those below are understood to mean either the visible waters, or the multitude of wicked angels, or the nations of all mankind. If this is so, then, no mention is made in this passage of when the angels were created, but only of when they were separated. There are some, however, who, in their most perverse and ungodly folly, deny that the waters were made by God, because nowhere is it written, 'God said, Let there be waters.' With similar folly they might say the same of the earth; for nowhere do we read, 'God said, Let there be earth.' But it is, they say, written that 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' And we say to them that this must be understood to include water. For, as the psalm says, 'the sea is His, and He made it; and His hands formed the dry land'.⁸⁸

Those who would understand the phrase 'the waters above the firmament' to mean the angels, however, do so because they are troubled by the weight of the elements; for they consider that the waters, because of their natural fluidity and weight, could not be set in the upper parts of the world. According to this reasoning, however, if they could make a man, they would not put in his head any of that moisture which the Greeks call 'phlegm', and which corresponds to water among the elements of our body.⁸⁹ According to the work of God, it is most appropriate for the head to be the seat of phlegm; but, according to those who weigh out the elements, this is absurd: so much so that, if we did not already know it, and if it had been written in the Book of Genesis that God had put a moist and cold – and therefore a heavy – humour in the higher

⁸⁸ Psalm 95,5.

⁸⁹ Cf. Jerome, *Epist.* 52,6.

parts of the human body, they still would by no means believe it. Even if they were prevailed upon to do so by the authority of the Scriptures, they would maintain that something else must be meant by the words in question.

But if we were diligently to scrutinise and discuss all that is written in that divine book which deals with the creation of the world, we should have to say many things, and we should wander very far from the purpose for which our present work was undertaken. Since, then, we have now sufficiently discussed these two distinct and contrasted societies of angels, in which the origin of the two human communities of which we presently intend to speak is also found, let us now at last bring this book to a close.

Book XII

I That both good and bad angels have only one nature

Having in the foregoing book seen how the two cities began among the angels, we must now speak of the creation of man, and show how the cities took their rise so far as regards the race of rational mortals. Before we do this, however, I see that I must first make certain remarks concerning the angels, by way of demonstrating, as far as I can, that it is not improper or inconsistent to speak of a society consisting of both men and angels. For we may properly speak not of four cities or societies – that is, two of angels and two more of men – but rather of two in all, one composed of the good angels and men together, and the other of the wicked.

It is not permissible for us to doubt that the contrasting appetites of the good and bad angels have arisen not from a difference in their nature and origin – for God, the good Author and Creator of all substances, created them both – but from a difference in their wills and desires. For some remained constant in cleaving to that which was the common good of them all: that is, to God Himself, and His eternity, truth and love. Others, however, delighting in their own power, and supposing that they could be their own good, fell from that higher and blessed good which was common to them all and embraced a private good of their own. They preferred the elation of pride to the loftiest dignity of eternity; the sharpness of vanity to the most certain truth; zeal for selfish ends to the uniting force of love. They became proud, false and envious.

The cause, therefore, of the blessedness of the good angels is their cleaving to God; so too, the cause of the misery of the wicked angels is to be found in the opposite, that is, in their not cleaving to God. When, therefore, it is asked why the good angels are blessed, it is rightly answered: because they cleave to God. And when it is asked why the wicked angels are miserable, it is rightly answered: because they do not cleave to God. For there is no other good apart from God by which the rational or intellectual creature is made blessed.

Certainly, not every creature is capable of being blessed; for animals, trees, stones, and things of that kind do not have the ability

or capacity to be so. Those creatures which are capable of being blessed, however, do not attain blessedness by themselves, being created out of nothing, but receive it from Him by Whom they were created. For their blessedness consists in the possession of that whose loss makes them miserable. Only He, then, Who is blessed not in another, but in His own good self, cannot be miserable, because only He cannot lose Himself.

We say, then, that there is no immutable good apart from the one, true, blessed God; and that the things which He has made are indeed good, because they come from Him, but are nonetheless mutable, because made not out of Him, but out of nothing. Although, therefore, they are not the supreme good – for God is a greater good than they are – those mutable things which can cleave to the immutable good, and so be blessed, are nonetheless great goods. And so completely is He their good that, without Him, they are necessarily miserable.

Those things in the created universe which are not capable of blessedness are not, however, better merely because they cannot be miserable. For it cannot be said that the other members of the body are superior to the eyes because they cannot be blind. But just as the sentient nature, even when it suffers pain, is superior to that of a stone which cannot suffer pain, so the rational nature is more excellent even when it is miserable than is that from which reason or sensation is absent, and which can therefore experience no misery. Since this is so, then, it is clearly a fault in such a rational nature if it does not cleave to God. For it has been created with an excellence such that, though mutable in itself, it can nonetheless achieve its blessedness by cleaving to the immutable Good, the supreme God; nor is its need satisfied unless it can be perfectly blessed, for which purpose only God suffices.

Moreover, every fault injures the nature in which it occurs, and is for this reason contrary to that nature. The nature which cleaves to God, therefore, differs from those which do not, not by its nature, but by its fault. Yet by this very fault the nature itself is shown to be exceedingly great and greatly worthy to be praised. For, beyond doubt, when its fault is rightly condemned, the nature itself is thereby praised: we rightly condemn a fault precisely because it dishonours a praiseworthy nature. For example, when we say that blindness is a defect of the eyes, we show that sight belongs

to the nature of the eyes. Again, when we say that deafness is a defect of the ears, we demonstrate that hearing belongs to their nature. So, then: when we say that it is a fault of the angelic creature if it does not cleave to God, we thereby declare most plainly that it belongs to its nature to cleave to God. And who can worthily conceive or express how great a joy it is to cleave to God: to live in Him, to draw wisdom from Him, to rejoice in Him, and to enjoy so great a good without death, without error and without grief? Thus, since every fault does injury to the nature whose fault it is, the fault of the wicked angels in not cleaving to God is itself enough to show that God created them with a nature so good that it is an injury to it not to be with God.

2 That there is no being contrary to God, for that
which is wholly opposite to Him Who supremely
and always is, is seen to be not-being

Let these remarks dissuade anyone from supposing, then, when we speak of the apostate angels, that they could have received another nature as from some different first cause, and not from God. But we shall more readily and easily avoid the great impiety of this error to the extent that we are able fully to understand what God said through the agency of the angel when he sent Moses to the children of Israel: 'I am that I am.'¹

For God is the Supreme Being – that is, He supremely *is*; and He is therefore immutable. He gave being to the things that He created from nothing, then, but not a supreme being like His own. To some He gave being more fully, and to others he gave it in a more restricted way; and so he arranged natural entities according to their degrees of being. (Just as the word 'wisdom' [*sapientia*] comes from 'to be wise' [*sapere*], so from 'to be' [*esse*] comes 'being' [*essentia*]: a new word, indeed, which was not used in the Latin speech of old,² but which has come into use in our own day so that our language should not lack a word for what the Greeks call *ousia*; for this is expressed very exactly by *essentia*.) To that Nature which supremely is, therefore, and by Whom all else that is was made, no

¹ Exod. 3,14.

² Cf. Seneca, *Epist.* 58,6; Quintilian, *Inst. orat.*, 2,14,2.

nature is contrary save that which is not; for that which is contrary to what is, is not-being. And so there is no being contrary to God, the Supreme Being, and the Author of all beings of whatever kind.

3 That God's enemies are so not by nature, but by their contrariety of will, which, because it injures them, injures a good nature; for if a vice does not injure, it is not a vice

God's enemies are so called in the Scriptures not by nature, but because they oppose His authority by their vice. They have no power to injure Him, but only themselves; for they are His enemies not because of their power to harm Him, but because of their will to resist Him. For God is immutable, and in every way incorruptible. Therefore, the vice by which those who are called God's enemies resist Him is an evil not to God, but to themselves; and it is an evil to them simply because it corrupts the good of their nature. It is not nature, therefore, which is contrary to God, but vice. For that which is evil is contrary to the good; and who will deny that God is the supreme good? Vice, therefore, is contrary to God, as evil is to good.

Moreover, the nature that it vitiates is good, and it is therefore contrary to this good also. But while it is contrary to God only as evil is to good, it is contrary to the nature that it vitiates, not only as evil, but also as harmful. For no evils are harmful to God, but only to natures which are mutable and corruptible even though, as the vices themselves attest, they were originally good; for, if they were not good, the vices could not injure them.³ For how do they injure them other than by taking away their wholeness, beauty, wellbeing, virtue and whatever other natural good which is characteristically removed or diminished by vice? But if good were entirely absent, there could be no removal of it, and therefore no vice; for there cannot be a vice which does no harm. And so we gather from this that, though vice cannot injure the Immutable Good, it can nonetheless injure only that which is good; for it does not exist where it does not do injury. We can, therefore, say this: that vice

³ Cf. Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 4.

cannot exist in the Supreme Good, but it can only exist in some good.

In some cases, therefore, there can exist things which are wholly good; but there can never be things which are wholly evil. For even those natures which have been vitiated by the rise of an evil will are indeed evil insofar as they are vitiated, but they are good insofar as they are natures. Also, when a vitiated nature is punished, there is, in addition to the good that it has in being a nature, the further good of its not being unpunished. For its punishment is just, and everything just is beyond doubt a good. For no one suffers punishment for faults of nature, but for vices of the will; for even the vice which has come to seem natural because strengthened by habit or because it has taken an undue hold derives its origin from the will. For we are here speaking of the vices of a natural creature whose mind is capable of possessing the light of reason by which the righteous is distinguished from the unrighteous.

4 Of the nature of things which are non-rational and which lack life; which, in their own kind and order, are not at odds with the beauty of the universe

It is, however, ridiculous to condemn as vices the faults of beasts and trees and other mutable and mortal things which entirely lack intellect or sensation or life, even if those faults should corrupt their perishable nature. For these creatures, at their Creator's will, have received a mode of existence which fits them, as they pass away and give place to others, to bring about the lowest form of beauty: the beauty of the seasons, which, in its own place, is a harmonious part of this world. For, though earthly things were not intended to be coequal with heavenly things, it would still not be fitting for the universe to lack these things altogether, even though heavenly things are better. Accordingly, in those places where such things properly belong, some arise as others pass away, the less succumb to the greater, and the things that are overcome are transformed into the qualities of those that overcome; and this is the appointed order of transitory things. We take no delight in the beauty of this order, because, being ourselves only parts of it, woven into it by virtue of our mortal condition, we cannot perceive that those particular aspects which offend us are blended aptly and fittingly

enough into the whole. This is why, in those circumstances where we are less able to perceive it for ourselves, we are most rightly instructed to have faith in the Creator's providence, lest, in the temerity of human rashness, we dare to find any fault with the work of so great a Maker.

If we give the matter prudent attention, however, we shall see that even the faults of earthly things, which are neither acts of will nor punishments, speak in favour of their original natures, and for the same reason: that there is none of them which does not have God as its Author and Creator. For it is that which pleases us in their natures that we are displeased to see taken away by some fault. This may not be so in cases where even the natures themselves displease men, as often happens when such natures become harmful to men. For then men consider them not in themselves, but only with reference to their utility, as with those creatures whose swarms smote the pride of the Egyptians.⁴ In this sense, however, it is possible for men to rail even against the sun; for certain offenders or debtors who do not pay their debts are sentenced by the judges to be pegged out in the sun. It is not with respect to our comfort or discomfort, then, but with respect to their own nature, that created things give glory to their Maker.⁵ Thus, even the nature of the eternal fire is without doubt worthy of praise, even though it will be the punishment of the ungodly when they are damned. For what is more beautiful than a flaming, blazing, shining fire? And what is more useful than fire for warming, reviving and cooking, even though nothing is more destructive when burning and consuming? We find, then, that the same thing is hurtful when applied in one way, but most beneficial when proper use is made of it. For who can find words sufficient to explain its usefulness throughout the whole world?

We must not listen, then, to those who praise the light of fire but condemn its heat: that is, who consider it not according to its natural force, but according to their own comfort or discomfort. For they wish to see, but not to burn; and they do not notice that the very light which is indeed so pleasing to them injures weak eyes by its unsuitability; and that in that heat which displeases them so

⁴ Exod. 8-10.

⁵ Cf. Augustine, *De gen. contra Man.*, 1,26,16.

much not a few animals find the conditions appropriate to a healthy life.⁶

5 That God is praised in every species and kind of nature

All natures, then, simply because they exist and therefore have a species of their own, a kind of their own, and a certain peace of their own, are certainly good.⁷ And when they are where they should be according to the order of their nature, they preserve their own being according to the measure in which they have received it. And those things which have not received an eternal being are changed, for better or worse, so as to serve the purposes and motions of those things under which the Creator's law has placed them. Thus, they tend in the scheme of divine providence to that end which is embraced in the principle of the government of the universe; and even when the corruption of mutable and mortal things brings them to complete annihilation, it does not, merely by causing them not to be, prevent them from bringing about the effects proper to them. This being so, then, God, Who supremely is, and Who therefore made every being which does not exist supremely (for no being that was made out of nothing could be His equal: or, indeed, exist at all, had He not made it), is not to be reproached with the faults which trouble us. Rather, He is to be praised when we contemplate all the natures which He has made.

6 What is the cause of the blessedness of the good angels, and what is the cause of the misery of the wicked angels

The truest cause of the blessedness of the good angels, then, is that they cleave to Him Who supremely is. And if we seek the cause of the misery of the wicked angels, it rightly occurs to us that they are miserable because they have forsaken Him Who supremely is, and have turned to themselves, who have no such supreme existence.

⁶ Cf. Pliny, 10,67; 29,4,76; Aristotle, *Hist. animal.*, 5,19.

⁷ Cf. Bk XIX, 12f.

And what else is their fault called than pride? For 'pride is the beginning of sin'.⁸ They refused, then, to husband their strength for God; and, since they could have a greater measure of being only by cleaving to Him Who supremely is, therefore, by preferring themselves, they preferred that which has a less perfect degree of being. This was their first defect and their first failing, and the first flaw in their nature, which was created not, indeed, with a supreme existence of its own, but nonetheless capable of possessing blessedness in the enjoyment of Him Who supremely is. For, by forsaking Him, their nature became not, indeed, no nature at all, but a nature with a less perfect degree of being, and therefore miserable.

Moreover, if we seek an efficient cause of the evil will of the wicked angels, we shall find none. For what is it that makes the will evil, when it is the will itself that makes an action evil? Thus, an evil will is the efficient cause of evil action, but nothing is the efficient cause of an evil will. For if anything is the cause, this thing itself either has a will or has not. If it has, the will is either good or evil. If it is good, who is so foolish as to say that a good will makes a will evil? For, in this case, a good will would be the cause of sin, and we cannot believe anything more absurd than this. On the other hand, if this thing which is supposed to make the will evil has an evil will itself, I now enquire what made it so; and, to set some limit to our enquiry, I ask: What made the first evil will evil? For a will which has itself been made evil by an evil will is not the first evil will. Rather, the first evil will is that which was made evil by no other. For if it were preceded by that which made it evil, that will was first which made the other evil. But if the response comes, 'Nothing made it evil; it was always evil', I then ask: has it been existing in some nature? For, if not, then it simply did not exist at all. But if it did exist in some nature, then it flawed and corrupted it and harmed it, and thus deprived it of good.

An evil will, therefore, could not exist in an evil nature, but in a nature good but nonetheless mutable, which this fault could injure. For if it did no injury, it was certainly no fault; and, consequently, the will in which it existed could not be called evil. Further, if it did injury, it did injury, surely, by taking away or diminishing good.

⁸ Eccclus. 10,13.

And therefore there could not have been from all eternity an evil will in that thing in which there had originally been a natural good, which the evil will was able to diminish by injuring it.

If, then, it did not exist from all eternity, who, I ask, made it? The only thing remaining for us to say is that something made the will evil which had no will of its own. I ask, then, whether this something was superior, inferior, or equal to the will. If superior, then it was better; in which case, how has it no will, and not, rather, a good will? So too if it were equal; for as long as two things each have an equally good will, the one cannot produce in the other an evil will. What remains, then, is that the will of the angelic nature, when it first sinned, was made evil by some inferior thing with no will of its own. But that thing, even if it is the basest and lowest of earthly things, is beyond doubt good in itself, because it is a nature and being with a form and species of its own in its own kind and order. How, therefore, can a good thing be the efficient cause of an evil will? How, I say, can good be the cause of evil? For when the will relinquishes that which is superior to itself and turns to that which is inferior, it becomes evil not because that towards which it turns is evil, but because the turning itself is evil. The inferior thing, then, did not make the will evil; rather, the will made itself evil by wickedly and inordinately desiring the inferior thing.

Suppose there to be two men, similar in the temperament of their soul and body. Both of them see the beauty of another person's body; but one of them is moved to desire to enjoy it unlawfully, whereas the other remains steadfast in the chastity of his will. What, do we suppose, causes there to be an evil will in the one but not in the other? What produces it in the man in whom it is produced? Not the body's beauty, for that was exhibited to eyes of both, yet did not produce an evil will in both. Did the flesh of the one cause the desire as he looked? Why, then, did not the flesh of the other? Or was it the soul? But why not the soul of both? – for we are taking it for granted that both were similar in the temperament of their soul and body. Perhaps we should say that the one was tempted by the hidden prompting of an evil spirit. Even in this case, however, would it not be by his own will that he consented to such prompting and to any persuasion whatsoever?

What, then, we ask, was the cause of this evil will which welcomed the persuasion to do evil? Now, in order to remove this

impediment to our present enquiry, let us suppose that both men are subjected to the same temptation, and that the one succumbs and consents to it whereas the other remains the same as he was. What else appears here than that the one is willing, and the other unwilling, to lapse from chastity? And what causes this but their own wills, given that the temperament of the body and soul of each person is the same? The same beauty was equally present to the eyes of both; the same hidden temptation assailed both equally. No matter how thoroughly we examine the matter, therefore, we can discover nothing which caused the particular will of one of them to be evil. For if we say that the man himself made his own will evil, what was this man before his will became evil but a good nature whose Author is God, the immutable Good? We have here two men who, before they saw and were tempted, were alike in body and soul, and of whom one consented to the Tempter who persuaded him, whereas the other did not consent, to make unlawful use of a beautiful body which was equally present to the vision of both. If, therefore, anyone says of the man who succumbed to temptation that he made his own will evil, even though he was certainly good before his will became evil, let us ask why the man did this: was it because he is a natural creature, or because he was made out of nothing? We shall find that the evil will arises not from the fact that the man is a natural creature, but from the fact that he is a natural creature made out of nothing. For if a natural creature itself is the cause of an evil will, what else are we compelled to say than that an evil is made by some good, and that good is the cause of evil? For, in such a case, a will is made evil by a natural creature that is good. And how can it be that a natural creature, good even though mutable, should produce any evil before his will has become evil: that is, should produce the evil will itself?

7 That we should not seek an efficient cause of an evil will

Let no one, then, seek an efficient cause of an evil will. For its cause is not efficient, but deficient, because the evil will itself is not an effect of something, but a defect. For to defect from that which supremely is, to that which has a less perfect degree of being: this is what it is to begin to have an evil will. Now to seek the causes of

these defections, which are, as I have said, not efficient causes, but deficient, is like wishing to see darkness or hear silence. Both of these are known to us, the former by means of the eye and the latter by the ear: not, however, by their appearance, but by their lack of any appearance. Let no one, then, seek to know from me what I know that I do not know; unless, perhaps, he wishes to learn how not to know that which we should know cannot be known. For those things which are known not by their appearance, but by their lack of it, are known (if the matter can be expressed and understood in this way) only by not knowing them; and so our knowledge of them is itself a kind of not-knowing. For when the bodily eye runs its gaze over corporeal objects, it sees darkness only where it begins not to see. So also, no other sense but the ear alone can perceive silence; yet silence is perceived in no other way than by not hearing. Thus, too, our mind perceives intelligible forms by understanding them; but when they are deficient, it knows them by not knowing them; for 'who can understand his failings?'⁹

8 Of the perverse love by which the will fell away from the immutable to the mutable good

This I know: that the nature of God cannot ever, anywhere or in any way, be defective, whereas natures made out of nothing can be. As to these natures, however: the more they have being, and the more good they do – the more, that is, they effect – the more they have efficient causes. On the other hand, insofar as they lack being, and for this reason do evil – for what, in this case, do they achieve but emptiness? – they have deficient causes. And I know also that, where the will becomes evil, this evil would not arise in it if the will itself were unwilling; and its defects are therefore justly punished, because they are not necessary, but voluntary. For the defections of the will are not towards evil things, but are themselves evil: that is, they are not defections towards things which are evil by nature and in themselves; rather, it is the defection of the will itself which is evil, because against the order of nature. It is a turning away from that which has supreme being and towards that which has less.

⁹ Psalm 19, 12.

Thus, avarice is not the fault of gold, but of the man who loves gold perversely, and who therefore neglects righteousness, which ought to be held in incomparably higher esteem than gold. Again, luxury is not the fault of beautiful and pleasant objects, but of the soul that loves bodily pleasures perversely and therefore neglects that temperance by which we are drawn towards objects more beautiful in their spirituality, and more delightful because they cannot perish. Again, boastfulness is not the fault of human praise, but of the soul that perversely loves the praise of men while disregarding the testimony of conscience.¹⁰ Nor is pride the fault of him who gives power, or of power itself, but of the soul which perversely loves its own power, and despises a more righteous higher Power. Hence, he who perversely loves the good of any nature whatsoever is made evil through this very good even as he attains it, and is made wretched because deprived of a greater good.

9 Whether the Creator who gave to the holy angels their nature also bestowed upon them their good will by imbuing them with love through the Holy Spirit

There is, then, no natural efficient cause, or, if one may so put it, no essential cause, of an evil will. For the will itself is the source of evil in mutable spirits, by which the good of their nature is diminished and depraved; and the will is made evil by nothing else than the defection by which God is forsaken: a defection of which the cause, too, is certainly deficient. If, however, we wish to say that there is no efficient cause of a good will either, we must beware lest it be thought that the good will of the good angels was not made, but is co-eternal with God. For if they themselves are created, how can we say that their good will was not created? But if it was created, was it created at the same time as they were, or did they first exist without it? If it was created with them, then there is no doubt that it was created by Him Who created them. And, as soon as they were created, they clung to Him Who had created them with the love that He had created in them. And they are distinguished from the society of the fallen angels because they have remained in the same good will, whereas the fallen angels have changed, by falling

¹⁰ Cf. 2 Cor. 1, 12.

away to an evil will: a will, that is, which is evil precisely because they have fallen away from the Good; from which, moreover, they certainly would not have fallen had they been unwilling to do so.

If, however, the good angels first existed without a good will, and then produced it in themselves without God's agency, they thereby made themselves better than He made them. God forbid! For without a good will, what were they but evil? Or, if they were not evil because, as yet, they did not have an evil will either (for they had not as yet fallen away from that which they had not yet begun to possess), then certainly they were not the same – not as good – as when they came to possess a good will. But if they could not make themselves better than they were made by Him Who is excelled by none in what He does, then certainly they could not come to possess that good will which made them better unless aided by the work of the Creator. And it was because of their good will that the good angels did not turn to themselves, who had less being, but to Him Who supremely is, and that, cleaving to Him, their own being was enlarged by participation in Him, and they were enabled to live a wise and blessed life. But what does this show but that their will, however good, would still have remained destitute of all but its desire had not He Who made their good nature out of nothing, and yet capable of enjoying Him, first prompted it to long for Him, and then filled it with Himself, and so made it better?

We must, moreover, discuss the question of whether, if the good angels made their own will good, they did this with or without will. If without, then surely it was not their doing; if with, was the will good or evil? If evil, how could an evil will give effect to a good will? If good, then they already had a good will. And who made this will which they already had but God, Who, establishing their nature and endowing it with grace in one simultaneous act, created them with a good will: that is, with that chaste love with which they cleave to Him? Hence, we must believe that the holy angels were never without a good will: that is, the love of God.

But the angels who, though created good, have nonetheless become evil, became so by their own will. This will was not made evil by their good nature, however, except in the sense that they willingly defected from the good; for the cause of evil is not good, but a defection from good. The fallen angels, therefore, either received less of the grace of the divine love than those who remained

steadfast in the same love; or, if both good and bad angels were created equal, then, while the latter fell by their evil will, the former were more amply aided by God, and achieved a fullness of blessedness so complete that they became wholly certain that they would never fall from it. But we have already treated of this point in the preceding book.¹¹

We must confess, then, with the praise due to the Creator, that it can be said not only of holy men, but of the holy angels also, that 'the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is given unto them'.¹² Also, it is true not only of men, but of the angels first and foremost, that, as is written, 'It is good to draw near to God.'¹³ And those who are sharers in this good have, both with Him to Whom they draw near and with one another, a holy fellowship. They are the one City of God, which is His living sacrifice and His living temple.¹⁴

But, this city has one part gathered in from among mortal men, which, in time to come, is to be united with the immortal angels. For now, however, its members are either mortal pilgrims upon earth, or, in the case of those who have passed through death, are at rest in the secret places where souls are received and abide. And I see that I must now speak, just as I did with respect to the angels, of how this part arose from the same God's creation. For from one man, whom God created as the first, the whole human race took its origin, according to the faith of Holy Scripture, which not unworthily has marvellous authority throughout the whole world and among all the nations.¹⁵ For, among other things, it foretold as a divine truth that all the nations would believe in it.

10 Of the opinion of those who believe that the human race, and the world itself, have always existed

Let us omit, then, the conjectures of men who do not know what they say when they speak of the nature and foundation of the human race. For there are some who hold the same opinion in relation to

¹¹ Cf. Bk XI, 13.

¹² Rom. 5, 5.

¹³ Psalm 73, 28.

¹⁴ Cf. Rom. 12, 1; Eph. 2, 19ff.

¹⁵ Cf. Mark 14, 9.

men as they hold concerning the world itself: that they have always existed. Thus, Apuleius, describing this race of animate creatures, says: 'Individually, they are mortal; but considered as a whole, as an entire race, they are everlasting.'¹⁶ But if the human race has always existed, how can those histories be true which tell us who were the first inventors, and what they invented, and who first instituted the liberal studies and other arts, and who first inhabited this or that region or part of the earth, and this island and that? When such men are asked this, they reply as follows: that most, even if not all, of the earth is devastated by floods and conflagrations after certain intervals of time; that the number of men then becomes very small, but that, from their progeny, the population is once more restored to its former size; that the things which seem to be newly discovered and originated at such times are in fact only being renewed, having been interrupted and extinguished by such great devastation; and that man could not exist at all, unless produced by an already-existing man.¹⁷ But they say what they think, not what they know.

11 Of the falseness of the history which ascribes many thousands of years to times gone by

Such men are also misled by certain wholly untruthful writings which purport to contain the history of many thousands of years of time.¹⁸ For we compute from the sacred writings that six thousand years have not yet passed since the creation of man. Hence, the writings which make reference to far more thousands of years than there have been are vain, and contain no trustworthy authority on the subject. But we shall not devote a great deal of argument to showing this. Rather, let us cite only that letter which Alexander the Great wrote to his mother Olympias, giving her the narrative which he had received from a certain Egyptian priest, which the latter had taken from writings held to be sacred among the Egyptians, and which contained an account of kingdoms known also to Greek history.¹⁹

¹⁶ *De deo Sacr.*, 4.

¹⁷ Cf. Plato, *Tim.*, 22c, 23c; Cicero, *De nat. deor.*, 2, 118.

¹⁸ Cf. Plato, *Tim.*, 21ff; *Phaedo*, 274ff; Cicero, *De divin.*, 1, 19, 36; Lactantius, *Div. inst.*, 7, 14.

¹⁹ Cf. Bk VIII, 5; 27.

According to this same letter of Alexander, the duration of the kingdom of Assyria exceeded five thousand years. In the Greek history, however, only some 1,300 years are recorded from the reign of Belus himself, whom the Egyptian sources also identify as the first lord of that kingdom.²⁰ Again, the Egyptian priest assigns more than eight thousand years to the empire of the Persians and Macedonians down to the time of Alexander, to whom he was speaking; whereas, among the Greeks, 485 years are assigned to the Macedonians down to the death of Alexander,²¹ and the Persian empire is reckoned to have lasted for 233 years until brought to an end by Alexander's victory.²²

The Greek history therefore gives a much smaller number of years than does the Egyptian. Indeed, the Greek figures would not equal the Egyptian even if multiplied by a factor of three. For it is said that, in former times, the Egyptians had so short a year that it ended after only four months; so that the fuller and truer year which both they and we now have would contain three of their old years.²³ But not even thus, as I have said, does the number of ages contained in the Greek history agree with that given by the Egyptian; and so we must be more ready to have faith in the former, for it does not exceed the true account of the years contained in our writings, which are truly sacred.

Moreover, if the account of the ages given in this celebrated letter of Alexander differs so greatly from things probable and credible, how much less may we believe those other writings which, though full of fabulous accounts of supposed antiquities, our adversaries wish to set against the authority of our most noted and divine books! – the books which foretold that the whole world would believe in them, and in which, as they foretold, the whole world has indeed believed. For the truth of the account of the past given in these books is shown by the very fact that their predictions of future events have been so entirely fulfilled.

²⁰ Cf. Bk xviii, 21; Justinus, *Epit. hist. philipp. Pomp. Trog.*, ed. Ruehl and Seel, 1, 2; Velleius Paterculus, *Hist. Rom.* 1, 6.

²¹ Cf. Velleius Paterculus, 1, 6; Justinus, *Epit.* 33, 2.

²² Curtius Rufus, *De gestis Alexandri Magni*, 4, 14, 20; Jerome, *Commentarium in Danielem*, 9, 689.

²³ Cf. Bk xv, 12; Lactantius, *Div. inst.*, 2, 13; Diodorus Siculus, 1, 26; Pliny, 7, 48, 155.

12 Of those who suppose not that this world is everlasting, but either that there are innumerable worlds, or that one and the same world is eternally being born and dissolved at the conclusion of a fixed cycle of ages

There are others who, though they do not believe that this world is everlasting, are of opinion either that it is not the only world, but that there are innumerable worlds,²⁴ or that it is indeed the only one, but that it arises and perishes at fixed intervals, and that this happens innumerable times. But those who think in this latter way must necessarily confess that the race of human beings existed before there were other men to beget them. For, unlike those who think that there are floods and conflagrations which do not affect the entire world, these cannot suppose that, when the whole world perishes, some men always remain, whose offspring then replenish the original population. Rather, since they believe that the world itself is reborn out of its own material, so also must they believe that the human race is first produced from the elements of the world, and that only then does the progeny of mortal men, like that of other animals, come teeming from their parents.

13 What reply is to be given to those who raise the question of the lateness of man's creation

When the question of the origin of the world arose, I answered those who refuse to believe that the world has not always existed and that – as even Plato himself most clearly confesses²⁵ (although not a few people consider that his real belief is at odds with what he says) – it had a beginning. Now, in the same way, I reply to those who wonder why man was not created during the innumerable and infinite ages of the past, but was created so late that, as we find in Sacred Scripture, fewer than six thousand years have elapsed since he began to exist. If it troubles them that, according to our authorities, so short a time has passed since man's creation, and that his years are so few, let them reflect that nothing which has a limit

²⁴ Cf. Lucretius, *De rerum nat.*, 2,1023ff.

²⁵ Cf. *Tim.*, 28B.

is long, and that, compared to endless eternity, all the expanses of finite time must be considered very little, or, indeed, nothing at all. For this reason, if we said that there had elapsed not five or six thousand years since God made man, but even 60,000 or 600,000, or 60 or 600 or 600,000 times that number, or this sum multiplied again and again until we came to numbers for which we no longer had a name, we could still ask the same question: Why did He not make man before?

For the eternity during which God refrained from creating man is so great that it stretches backwards from us without any beginning. Therefore, no matter how great and ineffable the number of ages with which it is compared may be, such an expanse of time, so long as it has a definite conclusion, should not be regarded as being even so big as the smallest drop of water in the entire sea, or, indeed, in the ocean that surrounds the world. For of these two things, one, indeed, is extremely small and the other incomparably great; but both are finite. And as to that expanse of time which comes forth from some beginning and is terminated by some end: no matter how great its extent, if it be compared with that which has no beginning, I do not know whether to say that we should call it the very smallest thing, or nothing at all. Suppose we take a finite expanse of time and, working backwards, subtract the briefest moments from it one by one, as you might take one day at a time from a man's life, starting with the day in which he now lives and going back to that of his birth. Even if the number of moments that you must subtract during this backward progression is so huge that no word can be found for it, this subtraction will nonetheless at some stage lead you back to a beginning. But now take a time which has no beginning, and, working backwards, take away from it, I do not say tiny moments one by one, or hours, or days, or months, or years, or even periods of years, but expanses of time so great that they cannot be counted by anyone whatsoever. Subtract expanses of time as great as that which we have supposed to be gradually consumed by the deduction of moments, and subtract them not once or twice or again and again, but for ever – and what do you achieve or accomplish by doing this? You never reach a beginning, for there is no beginning. Assuming, then, that the mortal condition of mankind continues for so long to decay and be renewed, and assuming also that our posterity remains as weak and ignorant as

we are, our descendants might with the same curiosity ask after 600,000 years what we ourselves now ask after a mere five thousand. The same question might have been put by those who lived before us, when the time of man's creation was still recent. The first man himself, indeed, might, on the day after he was made, or on the very same day, have asked why he was not made sooner. And no matter how much sooner he might have been made, this controversy as to the beginning of temporal things would have had no more meaning then than it does now or would have at any later time.

14 Of the belief which certain philosophers have in the revolution of the ages, which, after the completion of a fixed cycle, will always bring the universe back to the same order and aspect as before

The philosophers of this world have supposed that this controversy neither can nor should be resolved in any other way than by introducing cycles of time in which the same natural things are renewed and repeated eternally.²⁶ They have therefore asserted that this sequence of ages passing away and coming to be will recur without ceasing, with either one permanent world passing through all these cycles, or with the world waxing and waning at fixed intervals in such a way as always to exhibit as if new the same pattern of past and future events.²⁷ From this ridiculous cycle they cannot find a way of freeing even the immortal soul, which, even when it has achieved wisdom, still ceaselessly passes back and forth between false blessedness and true misery. For how can the soul be truly blessed when it has no assurance of being so for all eternity, and if it is either unaware of coming misery because ignorant of the truth, or most unhappy with foreboding even in its blessedness? If, however, the soul passes to blessedness and leaves miseries behind it, never to return to them, then something new comes about in time which does not have an end in time. In this case, therefore, why not the world also? And why not also man, created in the world? Thus, by following the straight path of wholesome doctrine, we

²⁶ Cf. Plato, *Tim.*, 39D; Cicero, *De nat. deor.*, 2,51f; Virgil, *Ecl.*, 4,5.

²⁷ Cf. Macrobius, *In somn. Scip.*, 2,10.

may escape I know not what false and circular paths discovered by wise men who are both deceived and deceiving.

There are, however, certain philosophers²⁸ who wish what we read in the Book of Solomon called Ecclesiastes to be understood as supporting the theory of cycles which renew and restore all things to their original state: 'What is that which hath been? It is that which shall be. And what is that which is done? It is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Who can speak and say, See, this is new? It hath been already of old time, which was before us.'²⁹ But Solomon said this either of those things of which he had just been speaking – that is, the passing and arising of the generations, the turning of the sun, the descent of the rivers – or else of all the kinds of things that arise and depart. For men were before us, are with us now, and will be after us; and so it is also with all animals or plants. Even monstrous and abnormal births, though they differ from one another, and though certain of them are said to have occurred only once, nonetheless resemble one another generally insofar as they are miraculous and monstrous; and, in this sense, they have been and will be, and it is not a recent and new thing under the sun for a monstrous birth to occur.

Some, moreover, would understand these words to mean that all things have already been made in the predestination of God, and that there is therefore no new thing under the sun. God forbid, however, that we of the true faith should believe these words of Solomon to signify those cycles in which, according to the philosophers, the same things are repeated time and time again. On their view, for example, just as, during a certain period of time, the philosopher Plato taught in the town of Athens at a school called the Academy, so, during innumerable past ages, at long but fixed intervals, the same Plato, the same city, the same school and the same pupils existed repeatedly, and will exist repeatedly during innumerable ages to come. God forbid, I say, that we should believe this. For Christ died for our sins once, and 'being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him'.³⁰ Also, we ourselves, after the resurrection, shall be 'ever with the Lord',³¹ to

²⁸ Cf. Origen, *De princ.*, 3,5,3.

²⁹ Eccl. 1,9f

³⁰ Rom. 6,9.

³¹ 1 Thess. 4,17.

Whom we now say, as the holy psalm admonishes, 'Thou shalt keep us, O Lord, Thou shalt preserve us from this generation.'³² And what follows is also, I think, appropriate enough: 'The wicked walk in a circle'³³ – not because their life is to recur in cycles, as they believe, but because the path of their error, that is, of their false doctrine, is circular.

15 Of the creation of the human race in time, which
God effected without any new design or change of
will

And is it any wonder if, wandering around in these circles, they find neither a way in nor a way out? For they do not know how the human race and this mortal condition of ours began, nor how it will be brought to a close, since they cannot penetrate the depth of God's intention.³⁴ For though He is Himself eternal and without beginning, He has nonetheless caused time to have a beginning; and man, whom He had not previously made, He has made in time not from a new and sudden resolve, but by His immutable and eternal purpose. Who can search out the unsearchable depth of this purpose? Who can scrutinise the inscrutable wisdom according to which God, without a change of will, created man when no man had ever existed before, and established his existence in time, and multiplied the human race from one parent? For the psalmist himself, having first said, 'Thou shalt keep us, O Lord, Thou shalt preserve us from this generation for ever',³⁵ and having next rebuked those whose foolish and ungodly teaching reserves for the soul no eternal redemption and blessedness, adds at once, 'The wicked walk in a circle.' Then, it is as if it were said to him, 'What, therefore, do you believe, feel, know? Are we to suppose that it suddenly pleased God to make man, whom He had never before made in the infinite past of eternity: God, in Whom there can arise nothing new, and in Whom there is no changeableness?' And the psalmist straightway replies, as if speaking to God Himself,

³² Psalm 12,7.

³³ Psalm 12,9 (LXX).

³⁴ Cf. 1 Cor. 2,10.

³⁵ Psalm 12,7.

‘According to the depth of Thy wisdom Thou hast multiplied the children of men.’³⁶ Let men, he says, hold whatever opinions they like, and let them believe and argue as they please: Thou hast multiplied the children of men according to the depth of Thy wisdom, which no man can know. For it is a very deep thing indeed, that God has always existed, and that He willed to make man, whom He had never before made, at some moment of time, but without changing His purpose and will.

16 Whether we are to believe that, since God has always been Lord, He has never lacked some creature to be Lord of; and in what sense we can say that a creature has always existed, and yet cannot say that it is co-eternal with Him

Certainly, I dare not say that there was ever a time when God was not Lord.³⁷ Neither, however, may I doubt that the first man was created at a certain time, before which he had no existence. But when I consider the question of what God could always have been Lord of, if there was not always some creature, I fear to make any assertion; for I both contemplate my own self and recall what is written: ‘What man is he that can know the counsel of God? Or who can think what the will of the Lord is? For the thoughts of mortal men are timid, and our devices are but uncertain. For the corruptible body presseth down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth upon many things.’³⁸

In this earthly tabernacle, therefore, I muse upon many things. And they are many indeed, it seems, because I do not muse upon the one thing which is true among the many, or beyond the many, and therefore I cannot find it. Suppose, then, I say that there have always been creatures for Him to be Lord of, Who is always Lord and Who has never not been Lord, but that these creatures have succeeded one another over the different ages of time (for we must not say that any creature is co-eternal with the Creator: this would be condemned by faith and sound reason alike). In this case, I must

³⁶ Psalm 12,8 (LXX).

³⁷ Cf. Augustine, *De Trin.*, 5,17.

³⁸ Wisd. 9,13ff.

take care not to fall into the absurd error, so far from the light of truth, of supposing that, on the one hand, mortal creatures have always existed throughout successive ages, with one passing away and another succeeding it, whereas, on the other, the immortal creatures did not begin to exist until the coming of our own world, when the angels were also created. (If, that is, we are right in supposing that the angels are signified by that light which was first made, or, rather, by that heaven of which it is said, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.') For the angels certainly could not exist before they were created; otherwise, if we say that they have always existed as immortal beings, they might be believed to be co-eternal with the Creator.

If, however, I say that the angels were not created in time, but existed before all times, as those over whom God, Who has never not been Lord, exercised His Lordship, I shall then be asked whether, if they were created before all times, they, as created beings, could have existed always. Here, the following reply might perhaps be given: Why can we not say that they have existed always, since that which exists in all time may not improperly be said to exist 'always'? So true is it, indeed, that these angels have existed in all time, that they were created even before time was; if, that is, time began with the heavens, and the angels existed before the heavens. Let us suppose, however, that time did not begin with the heavens, but existed even before the heavens. Here, by 'time' I do not mean hours, days, months and years; for these measures of periods of time which, according to strict usage, are called 'times', manifestly did begin with the motions of the heavenly bodies. For when God established the heavenly bodies, He said, 'Let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years.'⁴⁰ Rather, by time I mean that which is indicated by some changing motion, one part of which occurs earlier and another later because such parts cannot exist simultaneously. If, then, there was some such motion among the angels before the heavens were made, so that time existed and the angels were moving in time from their very creation, then they have existed in all time, since time itself came into being when

³⁹ Cf. Bk XL, 9.

⁴⁰ Gen. 1, 14; cf. Augustine, *Confess.*, 11, 23.

they did. And who will say that what has existed in all time has not existed for 'always'?

But if I reply in this way, it will be said to me: How, therefore, are they not co-eternal with the Creator, if He and they have always existed? How, indeed, can they be said to have been created, if we are also to understand that they have always existed? What answer is to be made to this? Shall we not say that they have indeed always existed, since they have existed in all time and were made together with time (or time was made together with them); and yet that they were also created? For, indeed, we will not deny that time itself was created, though no one doubts that time has existed in all time.

For if it has not existed in all time, then there was a time when time did not exist; and who, however foolish, would say this? For we can rightly say that there was a time when Rome did not exist; that there was a time when Jerusalem did not exist; that there was a time when Abraham did not exist; that there was a time when man did not exist; and so on. Finally, if the world was not made at the beginning of time, but after a certain lapse of time, then we can say that there was a time when the world did not exist. But to say that there was a time when time did not exist is as inappropriate as it would be if we were to say that there was a man when man did not exist or that the world existed when the world did not exist. If two different things are understood, we can in a certain sense say this: that there was another man when this man did not exist. So, therefore, we can rightly say that there was another time when this time did not exist. But who but a complete simpleton would say that there was a time when time did not exist?

Just as, therefore, we say that time was created even though we also say that it has existed 'always', because time has existed in all time, so also it does not follow that, if the angels have always existed, they were therefore not created. For we say that they have 'always' existed because they have existed in all time; and we say that they have existed in all time because time itself could not by any means exist without them. For where there exists no created thing by whose changing motions time is produced, time simply cannot exist. For this reason, even though the angels have always existed, they were created; neither, if they have always existed, are they therefore co-eternal with the Creator. For He has always

existed in an immutable eternity, whereas they were created. But they are said to have 'always' existed because they have existed in all time; for, without them, time would by no means have been possible.

But since the passage of time involves mutability, time cannot be co-eternal with an immutable eternity.⁴¹ And, for this reason, though the immortality of the angels does not take place in time – does not have a past, as though it no longer existed, nor a future, as though it were not yet – the movements of the angels, by which time is produced, nonetheless do pass from future to past. The angels cannot, therefore, be co-eternal with the Creator, in Whose motion we cannot say that there has existed that which now no longer exists, or that there will exist that which is not yet.

Thus, if God has always been Lord, He has always had creatures under His lordship. These creatures were not, however, begotten of Him, but made by Him out of nothing. Nor are they co-eternal with Him, for He existed before them. But He was at no time without them, for He preceded them not by the passage of time, but by His abiding eternity.⁴²

But if I respond in these terms to those who ask how God was always the Creator and always Lord if there was not always some creature subject to Him; or how, if this creature always existed, it was created and not rather co-eternal with its Creator: I shall, I fear, more readily be thought to be asserting what I do not know than teaching what I do. And so I return to that which our Creator has wished us to know; and, as to those things which He has permitted wiser men to know in this life, or has reserved to be known in the next by those who are entirely perfected, I confess that these are beyond my powers. I have, however, thought it right to treat of these matters without making positive assertions, so that those who read may see that they ought to abstain from perilous questions. Rather than judging themselves competent to deal with all such questions, let them understand that they are to follow the wholesome precept of the apostle, where he says: 'For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly,

⁴¹ Cf. Bk xi,6

⁴² Cf. *Confess.*, 11,13ff.

according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.⁴³ For if an infant is given nourishment according to his strength, he will become able, as he grows, to take more; but if his strength and capacity be exceeded, he will ail instead of growing.⁴⁴

**17 How we are to understand God's promise to man
of eternal life which was given 'before the eternal
times'**

I confess that I do not know what ages passed before the human race was created; but I do not doubt that no created thing of any kind is co-eternal with the Creator. Even the apostle speaks of time as eternal, however; and he speaks not of the future, but – which is more to be wondered at – of the past. For he says, 'In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the eternal times, but hath in His own times manifested His word'.⁴⁵ Behold: he says that, in the past, there have been eternal times. These, however, were not co-eternal with God, for God existed 'before the eternal times'. Also, He promised life eternal, which He manifested in His own times (that is, in due time); and what else is this than His Word? For the Word of God is eternal life. But in what sense did He promise? For the promise was certainly made to men, yet men had no existence 'before the eternal times'. Does this not mean that, in His eternity, and in His own co-eternal Word, that which was to happen in its own future time was already predestined and fixed?

**18 What defence is made of God's immutable
purpose and will by sound faith against the
reasonings of those who believe that the works of
God are repeated for all eternity and recur for ever
in the same cycle of ages**

I have no doubt also that, before the first man was created, no man of any kind had ever existed: neither the same man himself, recur-

⁴³ Rom. 12,3.

⁴⁴ Cf. 1 Cor. 3,1f.

⁴⁵ Titus 1,2f.

ring in I know not what cycles or having made I know not how many revolutions, nor any other of a similar nature. Nor am I deterred from this belief by the arguments of the philosophers. The most acute of these arguments is thought to be that which asserts that the infinite cannot be contained within any knowledge. For this reason, they say, the conceptions which God has in His mind of all the finite things which He makes are themselves finite. We cannot, however, believe that His goodness was ever idle. If we did believe this, they say, we should be supposing that God had begun to act at some point in time, after a past eternity of inactivity, as if He regretted His former idleness, which had had no beginning, and had therefore begun to set about His work. And so, they conclude, it must be that the same things are always repeated, and that, as they pass, they are to be repeated for ever: either the world remains the same while undergoing change – the world which has always been, yet was created – or it is, in these recurring cycles, repeatedly coming into being and passing away. Otherwise, if we say that the works of God were begun at a particular time, this would amount to a belief that He had blamed His own past, beginningless, leisure as inert and slothful, and had therefore changed it as displeasing to Himself.

But let us suppose, by contrast, that God has indeed been engaged in making temporal things eternally, but an endless succession of different things, so that, in this way, He came eventually to make man, whom He had never made before. In this case, it would seem that He made man not with knowledge – for our adversaries suppose that no knowledge can comprehend an infinite number of things – but on the spur of the moment, as it came into His mind, or, as it were, by a chance impulse.

On the other hand, they say, if those cycles be admitted – if we suppose that the same temporal things are repeated while the world either remains the same in the midst of all such changes, or else passes away and comes to be again – then there is attributed to God neither a duration of slothful leisure so long as to be without beginning, nor an improvident and impulsive creation. But if the same things are not thus repeated, their infinite variety and diversity cannot be contained within any knowledge or foreknowledge.

These are the arguments by which the ungodly endeavour to turn our simple piety aside from the right path and make us walk in

circles with them.⁴⁶ Even if reason could not refute them, our faith should laugh at them; but, with the help of the Lord God, manifest reason destroys these revolving circles which opinion constructs. For what especially leads our adversaries into error, so that they prefer their own circles to the straight path of truth, is the fact that they use their own human, mutable and limited mind to measure the divine mind, which is entirely immutable, infinite in its capacity, and capable of comprehending all things, however numerous, without alternating its thought from one to another. And so what the apostle says applies to them; for 'comparing themselves with themselves, they do not understand'.⁴⁷ For they themselves act according to whatever new purpose comes into their minds, because their minds are indeed mutable. And because they do not imagine God, Whom they cannot imagine, but themselves instead of Him, they compare not God, but themselves, and not with Him, but with themselves. As for us, however, it is not permissible for us to believe that God is in a different state when He works from that which He is in when He rests. Indeed, we should not say that He has 'states' at all, for this is to imply that something arises in His nature which did not exist there before. For he whose state changes undergoes something, and whoever undergoes something is mutable. We should not, therefore, suppose God's rest to be a state of laziness, indolence or inertia; nor should we suppose His work to be a state of labour, endeavour or industry. He knows how to act while He rests, and to rest while He acts. He can bring to a new work an intention which is not itself new, but eternal; and when He now begins to make something that He has not made before, this is not because He regrets having abstained from doing so hitherto.

But when we speak of God's former rest and subsequent work – and I do not know how else these things could be understood by man – there is no doubt that the terms 'former' and 'subsequent' are used only in relation to things which formerly did not exist and subsequently came into existence. It is not the case that a former purpose is altered and obliterated in God Himself by a subsequent and different purpose. Rather, with one and the same eternal and immutable will, He caused the things that He created both not to

⁴⁶ Psalm 12,8.

⁴⁷ 2 Cor. 10,12.

be in existence formerly, for as long as they were not, and to be in existence subsequently, when they began to be. In this way, perhaps, He demonstrated in a marvellous fashion, to those who are able to see such things, that He has no need of the creatures which He has made, but, rather, created them out of His own unmotivated goodness; for He abode without created things for an eternity which had no beginning, yet His blessedness was no less complete.

19 Against those who say that God's knowledge cannot comprehend an infinite number of things

But our adversaries also say that God's knowledge cannot comprehend an infinite number of things. It only remains for them, then, to plunge themselves into the deep chasm of ungodliness by daring to say that God does not know all numbers. For it is absolutely certain that these are infinite, since, no matter at what number you suppose an end to be made, this number can always be increased. And I do not say that this is done simply by adding one to it. Rather, however great the number may be, and however enormous the multitude which it expresses, it can still be not only doubled, but even multiplied, according to the principle and science of number. Moreover, each number is so defined by its own properties that no one of them can be equal to any other. They are therefore both unequal and different from one another; and, while they are individually finite, collectively they are infinite. Does God not know numbers, then, because of this infinity? And does God's knowledge extend only to a certain number of numbers, while he is ignorant of the others? Who is so completely demented as to say such a thing?

Nor will our adversaries venture to dismiss numbers lightly and say that they do not pertain to God's knowledge; for Plato, their great authority, depicts God as constructing the world according to numerical principles.⁴⁸ And we read in our own Scriptures that it is said to God, 'Thou has ordered all things in number, and measure, and weight.'⁴⁹ The prophet also says, 'Who bringeth out their host by number'.⁵⁰ And our Saviour says in the Gospel, 'The very

⁴⁸ *Tim.* 35f.

⁴⁹ *Wisd.* 17,20.

⁵⁰ *Is.* 40,26 (LXX).

hairs of your head are all numbered.⁵¹ God forbid, then, that we should doubt that all number is known to Him 'Whose understanding', as the psalmist recites, 'is infinite'.⁵² For though there is no finite number of infinite numbers, the infinity of number is still not incomprehensible to Him Whose understanding is itself infinite. And so, if everything which is comprehended by knowledge is made finite by the comprehension of the knower, then all infinity is certainly made finite to God in some ineffable way because it is not incomprehensible to His knowledge.

If the infinity of number cannot be infinite to God, then, because comprehended by His knowledge, who are we mere men, that we should presume to set limits to His knowledge: to say that, unless the same temporal things are repeated in the same cycles of time, God cannot either foreknow all that He makes in order to make it, or know it when He has made it? For His wisdom, which is simple in its multiplicity and uniform in its variety, comprehends all that is incomprehensible with a comprehension which is itself so incomprehensible that, though He has willed always to make subsequent events new and unlike all that went before them, He has not produced them without order and foresight; nor has He foreseen them only at the last moment, but by His eternal foreknowledge.

20 Of ages of ages

It may be that those times which are called 'ages of ages' are conjoined in a continuous series and follow one another in an ordered dissimilarity, and that only those who are set free from misery abide without end in blessed immortality. Or it may be that, when they are called 'ages of ages', we are to understand by this the ages which abide with unmoved steadfastness in the wisdom of God and which are the efficient causes, as it were, of those ages which pass in time. As to this, I do not venture to give a decision. It may perhaps be that 'ages' simply means 'age', so that 'ages of ages' means nothing more than 'age of age', just as 'heavens of heavens' means nothing more than 'heaven of heaven'. For God called the firmament above

⁵¹ Matt, 10,30.

⁵² Psalm 147,5.

which are the waters, 'heaven'; yet the psalm says, 'let the waters that are above the heavens praise the Lord'.⁵¹

Which of these two meanings is to be assigned to 'ages of ages', or whether there is some other meaning beyond these two, is, therefore, a most profound question. But it will not hinder our present purpose if we defer discussion of this question for the time being. In due course, we may be able to reach some definite conclusion on the matter; alternatively, a more careful consideration of it may make us more cautious, so that we shall not dare to make any bold assertion concerning something so obscure. At present, however, we are arguing against the opinion which holds that there are cycles such that the same things are necessarily repeated after certain intervals of time. But no matter which opinion regarding the meaning of 'ages of ages' is true, it has no bearing on the question of these cycles. For it does not matter whether the term 'ages of ages' means not a repetition of the same age, but a succession of different ages following one another in perfectly ordered connexion, while the redeemed souls abide in most certain bliss without any return to misery; or whether the 'ages of ages' are eternal, standing in relation to time in the ordinary sense as ruler does to subject: there is still no room for such cycles, the existence of which is especially refuted by the eternal lives of the saints.

21 Of the impiety of those who assert that the souls which partake of supreme and true blessedness must nonetheless return again and again, in cycles of time, to labour and misery

What godly ears could bear to hear the following argument? After a life passed in the midst of so many and such great calamities (if, indeed, it can be called a life at all, which is so much more like death: a death so grievous that the very love of it makes us dread the death which will release us from it), and after many great and frightful evils have at last been expiated and ended by means of true religion and wisdom, we achieve the vision of God. We are made blessed by the contemplation of incorporeal light and by par-

⁵¹ Psalm 148,4.

ticipation in His changeless immortality, which we burn with love to attain. But then, our adversaries say, we must of necessity lose all this in due time, and those who lose it are cast down again from that eternity, truth and felicity to hellish mortality and wicked folly! They are caught in the toils of horrible miseries, in a state where God is lost, truth held in odium, and blessedness sought in filthy iniquities. Moreover, they say, this has happened in the past, and will happen in the future, again and again without any end, recurring at fixed intervals and in measures of ages past and to come. And this eternal revolution of fixed cycles, which remove and restore true misery and false blessedness in turn, occurs so that God may be able to know His own works. For, on the one hand, He cannot rest from creating, but, on the other, if He were always engaged in creating, He could not then know the infinite number of His creatures.

Who, I say, would listen to such things? Who can believe or bear them? If they were true, it would be more prudent to remain silent about them. Indeed – and I wish to say this as clearly as I can – it would be wiser not to know them at all. For if we are not to remember these things in the life to come, and so are to be blessed, why should we increase the burden of our present misery by knowing them now? But if, on the other hand, it will be necessary for us to know them hereafter, let us at any rate remain ignorant of them here. In that way, we may at least be happier in looking forward to the supreme good than in attaining it; for, here, we look forward to everlasting life, but in the world to come we are to discover that it is blessed but not everlasting, since it must at some time be lost.

Again, if our adversaries say that no one can attain to the blessedness of the world to come unless he has in this life acquired a knowledge of those cycles in which blessedness and misery succeed one another in turn, how, then, can they ever maintain that the more a man loves God, the more readily he attains to blessedness? For what they teach renders love itself lifeless. For who would not be more careless and tepid in his love for One Whom he thinks he will of necessity forsake, and Whose truth and wisdom he will come to hate; and this, moreover, after he has achieved the most blessed and perfect knowledge of Him that he is capable of? Could anyone be faithful in his love for even a human friend, if he knew that he

would in time to come be his enemy?⁵⁴ But God forbid that there should be any truth in a doctrine threatening us with a true misery which is never to end, but which is to be interrupted, often and without end, by intervals of false blessedness. For what happiness can be more false and fallacious than that in whose greatest light of truth we nonetheless remain ignorant of the fact that we shall presently be miserable, or in whose highest citadel of happiness we nonetheless fear that we shall be so? For if, on the one hand, we are to be ignorant of coming calamity in the world to come, then our present misery here is better informed than we shall be then; for, here, we know that blessedness is coming. If, on the other hand, the disaster that threatens us is not hidden from us in the world to come, then the soul spends the periods of time which it passes in misery more happily than those which it passes in happiness! For, in the former case, when the periods are completed, the soul is to be lifted up to blessedness; but, in the latter case, it is to return once again to misery. Thus, the hope that we have in the midst of our unhappiness is happy, and that which we have in the midst of our happiness is unhappy. Hence, since we suffer present evils in this life and fear the evils which threaten us in the next, it is truer to say that we shall always be miserable than that we may sometimes be happy.

But, as godliness proclaims, and as the truth demonstrates, these things are false. For we are truly promised a true happiness which will be ours to possess forever in assured security, undisturbed by any unhappiness. Let us, therefore, follow the straight path which we have in Christ. With Him as our guide and Saviour, let us turn the direction of our faith and mind away from the vain and absurd cycles of the ungodly. Porphyry, though himself a Platonist, refused to follow their opinion that souls pass away and return without ceasing in these cycles. He was either struck by the foolishness of such an opinion, or still retained some reverence for the Christian age. As I have already mentioned in the tenth book,⁵⁵ he preferred to say that the soul is delivered into this world so that it may know evils, and, redeemed and purged from them, is never again to suffer such things when it has returned to the Father. How much more,

⁵⁴ Cf. Cicero, *De amic.*, 6,59.

⁵⁵ Bk x,30.

then, ought we to detest and shun a falsehood so inimical to the Christian faith!

Having dealt with these cycles and refuted them, then, no necessity now compels us to suppose that there was no point in time at which the human race began to exist. For we have refuted the view that there is nothing new in nature which has not previously existed in I know not what cycles, and is not hereafter to exist again at fixed intervals of time. For if the soul, once redeemed, as it never was redeemed before, is never to return to misery, then something is accomplished in it which was never accomplished before; and this something, indeed, is of very great magnitude: namely, an eternal happiness which is never to end. But if there can occur in an immortal nature some new thing which never has been repeated in any cycle, nor ever will be, why should it be argued that such a thing cannot occur in mortal natures? If our adversaries say that blessedness is not new to the soul, but only a return to that state in which it has existed eternally, then at least its first deliverance from the misery which it had never experienced before was something new; also, the misery itself, which had never previously existed in the soul, was something new that had been produced in it. And if these new things arose by chance, and do not come within the order of events appointed by Divine Providence, then where are those fixed and measured cycles in which no new thing occurs, but all things are repeated as they were before?

If, on the other hand, these new things are not excluded from the order of providence (whether the soul was delivered into misery or fell into it merely), then it is, after all, possible for new things to occur which never occurred before, yet which do not lie outside the natural order. And if the soul is able, by its own imprudence, to make for itself a new misery, which was not unforeseen by the Divine Providence but which was included in the order of nature, in which the means of deliverance from it was also not unprovided, how can we, even with all the temerity of human vanity, dare to deny that God can make new things – new to the world, but not to Him – which He never made before, but which were never unforeseen by Him? If our adversaries say that it is indeed true that redeemed souls will not return to misery, but that, even so, no new thing occurs, because there always has been, is now, and always will be a succession of souls gaining their redemption, they must still

concede that there are, at any rate, new souls to whom the experience of both misery and deliverance from it are new. For if they say that those souls out of which new men are daily being made (from whose bodies, if they have lived wisely, they are so delivered that they never return to misery) are not new, but have existed from all eternity, they will in consequence have to say that they are infinite in number. For no finite number of souls, however great, would have been sufficient to make an eternal succession of new men whose souls were to be redeemed forever from this mortal condition, never again to return to it. And they will then not be at all able to explain how there can be an infinite number of souls if, as they wish to maintain, things must be finite in number in order for God to know them.

Therefore, now that we have exploded those cycles in which it was supposed that the soul is brought back at fixed intervals to the same miseries, what can be more in keeping with godliness than to believe that it is not impossible for God both to create new things never before created, and, by his ineffable foreknowledge, to preserve His will unaltered in doing so? As to the question of whether or not the number of souls which have been redeemed and are no longer to return to misery can be continually increased: let this be decided by the philosophers who argue with such subtlety over whether a limit is to be put on things infinite. For our part, we bring our argument to a close by stating the following two alternatives. Suppose, on the one hand, that the number of souls can be increased continually. In this case, if the number of redeemed souls – a number which never before existed – not only was created once, but will never cease to be created, what reason is there to deny that something could be created which had never been created before? But suppose, on the other hand, it is more suitable to say that the number of souls which have been redeemed and are never to return to misery is fixed, and that this number will never be further increased. In this case, there is still no doubt that this number, whatever it is, never existed before; also, it cannot increase and reach its final quantity without having some beginning, and this beginning itself never before existed. In order that there might be this beginning, therefore, a man was created before whom no man existed.

22 Of the creation of the one first man, and of the human race in him

We have, then, explained as far as we could the exceedingly difficult question of God's eternity and of how He can create new things without any novelty of His own will. Now that we have done this, it is not hard to see how much better it is that God multiplied the human race from the one man whom He created first, than it would have been had He originated it from several. As to the other animals, he created some solitary and, as it were, lone-ranging: that is, more inclined towards solitude. Examples are eagles, kites, lions, wolves, and so on. Others he made gregarious, and these congregate together and prefer to live in company. Examples are doves, starlings, stags, fallow deer, and so forth. But in neither case did God produce these from a single individual. Rather, He commanded that several should come into being at once. Man, however, whose nature was to be in a manner intermediate between angels and beasts, God created in such a way that, if he remained subject to his Creator as his true Lord, and if he kept His commandments with pious obedience, He should pass over into the company of the angels and obtain, without suffering death, a blessed immortality without end. But if he offended the Lord his God by using his free will proudly and disobediently, he should live, as the beasts do, subject to death: the slave of his own lust, destined to suffer eternal punishment after death. God therefore created only one single man: not, certainly, that he might be alone and bereft of human society, but that, by this means, the unity of society and the bond of concord might be commended to him more forcefully, mankind being bound together not only by similarity of nature, but by the affection of kinship. Indeed, God did not even create the woman who was to be united with the man in the same way as He created the man. Rather, it pleased Him to create her out of the man,⁵⁶ so that the human race might derive entirely from the one man.

⁵⁶ Gen. 2,22.

23 That God foreknew that the first man whom He created would sin, and that He at the same time foresaw how great a company of godly persons would be translated to the fellowship of the angels by His grace

But God was not ignorant of the fact that man would sin and that, being thereby made subject to death himself, would propagate men doomed to die. God knew moreover that these mortals would progress to such enormities of sin that even the beasts, devoid of rational will, who came swarming in such numbers from the waters and the earth, would live in greater security and peace with their own kind than men would, whose race had been produced from one individual for the very purpose of commending concord. For not even lions or dragons have ever waged such wars among themselves as men have.⁵⁷ God foresaw also, however, that a godly people would be called to adoption by His grace,⁵⁸ and that, justified by the remission of sins, they would be united by the Holy Spirit with the holy angels in eternal peace, when the last enemy, death, had been destroyed.⁵⁹ And He knew that this people would profit from the reflection that God had caused the human race to be derived from one man, in order to show mankind how highly He prizes unity in a multitude.⁶⁰

24 Of the nature of the human soul created in the image of God

God, then, made man in His own image.⁶¹ For He created for him a soul by virtue of which he might surpass in reason and intelligence all the creatures of the earth, air and sea, which do not have souls of this kind. And when God had formed man out of the dust of the earth,⁶² He endowed him with a soul of the kind that I have just described. Either He had already made it and now imparted it to

⁵⁷ Cf. Pliny, 7,1,5; Juvenal, 13,16off; Seneca, *De clem.*, 1,26.

⁵⁸ Cf. Rom. 8,15; Gal. 4,5.

⁵⁹ 1 Cor. 15,26.

⁶⁰ Cf. Psalm 133,1.

⁶¹ Gen. 1,26f.

⁶² Gen. 2,7.

the man by breathing, or else He made it by breathing, so that God's breath, which He made by breathing – for what else is 'to breathe' than 'to make breath'? – is itself the soul. Then, He also made a wife for the man, to assist him in the task of procreation, and He formed her from a bone taken out of the man's side. He did this as God, however; for we are not to think of these things in a fleshly way, as if God worked in the manner of craftsmen who, as we are accustomed to see, use their bodily members and earthly materials of all kinds to fashion whatever their artistic skill enables them to make. God's hand is God's power; and He brings about visible results by working invisibly. But this is deemed fabulous rather than true by those who measure by familiar and everyday works the might and wisdom of God, by which He knows and can make without seeds the very seeds themselves. Because they do not understand the things which were created at the very beginning, they regard them with disbelief – as if the very things that they do know concerning human conception and birth would not seem more incredible if told to those who had no experience of them. And yet these very things, too, are attributed by many to natural and bodily causes rather than to the working of the divine mind.

25 Whether the angels can be said to be the creators of anything, even the least of creatures

But in these books we have no business with those who do not believe that the divine mind makes or cares for these things. There are, however, those who believe, with their master Plato, that all mortal creatures – among whom man holds the pre-eminent place, akin to the gods themselves – were created not by that supreme God by Whom the world was made, but by other, lesser gods, created by Him and acting with His permission or at His command.⁶³ If these persons could only be rid of the superstition which causes them to seek to justify the offering of rites and sacrifices to such gods as though they were their creators, they would also easily shake off the error of this opinion. For it is impious to believe or to say – even before we can understand why – that any being other than God is the creator of any nature, no matter how small and

⁶³ Cf. Plato, *Tim.*, 41C.

mortal. As for the angels, whom the Platonists prefer to call gods: they do indeed take part, whether by God's command or with His permission, in the bringing forth of the things of this world; but we can no more say that they are the creators of animals than we can call farmers the creators of fruits and trees.

26 That every nature, and every species of every creature, is made and formed only by the work of God

For there is one kind of form which is imposed from without upon every item of corporeal matter whatsoever: for example, the form given by potters and smiths and that class of artists who paint and mould shapes which resemble the bodies of animals. But there is another and internal kind of form, which is not itself made, but which produces, as their efficient cause, not only natural corporeal forms but also the very souls of living creatures, and which springs from the secret and hidden choice of a living and intelligent nature. Form in the first of these two senses can be attributed to every craftsman; but form in the second sense is to be attributed to one Maker, Creator and Establisher only: to God, Who made the world itself and the angels, when no world and no angels existed.

For there is a divine and, if I may so express it, productive energy which cannot be made, but makes. When the world came into being, this energy gave the form of roundness to the earth and to the sun. This same divine and productive energy, which cannot be made, but makes, gave the form of roundness to the eye and to the apple. And other natural objects likewise receive the form which we see bestowed upon each of them as it comes into being not from without, but from the inmost power of the Creator, Who said, 'Do I not fill heaven and earth?'⁶⁴ and Whose wisdom it is that 'reacheth from one end to another mightily; and sweetly doth she order all things'.⁶⁵ I do not, then, know what kind of service the angels, themselves created first, gave to the Creator in making other things. I dare not attribute to them something that they perhaps cannot do. Neither, however, ought I to deny what they can do. It is, however,

⁶⁴ Jer. 23,24.

⁶⁵ Wisd. 8,1.

with their approval that I attribute the work of creation and formation which brought all natural things into being to that God to Whom the angels themselves gratefully ascribe their own existence.

We do not, then, say that farmers are the creators of each kind of fruit, for we read, 'Neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.'⁶⁶ Indeed, we do not call the earth herself a creator, even though she seems to be a fruitful mother to all the things which she causes to burst forth from the seed, and whose roots she holds fast; for, again, we read: 'God giveth it a body, as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body.'⁶⁷ We ought not even to say that a woman creates her own offspring; for He, rather, is its Creator, Who said to His servant, 'Before I formed thee in the womb, I knew thee.'⁶⁸ And although the various states of mind of a pregnant woman can to some extent induce certain qualities in her unborn child – as Jacob with his peeled rods caused cattle of various colours to be born⁶⁹ – yet the mother no more creates the natural creature that is born than she creates herself. Thus, whatever corporeal or seminal causes may be employed in the generation of things, either by the agency of angels, men, or some kind of animal, or by the coming together of male and female; and whatever power the desires and mental states of the mother have to produce certain lineaments and colours in the tender and malleable foetus: the natures themselves, which are thus affected in one way or another after their kind, are nonetheless made by none but the supreme God. It is His hidden power, pervading all things and undefilably present in them all, which causes all that exists in any way to have whatever degree of being it has; for, without Him, it would not exist in this way or that, nor would it have any being at all.

But, as to that form which craftsmen impose on corporeal things from without, we do not say that Rome and Alexandria were founded by masons and architects, but by the kings whose will, intention and authority caused them to be built. Thus, the one has Romulus as its founder, and the other Alexander. We ought, then, to be all the more ready to say that God alone is the Author of all

⁶⁶ 1 Cor. 3,7.

⁶⁷ 1 Cor. 15,38.

⁶⁸ Jer. 1,5.

⁶⁹ Gen. 30,37ff.

natures, since He neither uses in His work any material which has not itself been made by Him, nor any workmen who were not themselves created by Him. Moreover, if He were to withdraw His creative power, so to speak, from things, they would no more exist than they did before they were created. When I say 'before', however, I speak with reference to eternity, not to time. For what other creator could there be of time, than He Who made those things whose movements constitute the passage of time?

27 Of the opinion of the Platonists, who suppose that the angels, though indeed created by God, were themselves the creators of human bodies

When he attributed the creation of the other living creatures to those lesser gods who were made by the supreme God, Plato no doubt wished us to understand that, whereas the immortal part was derived from God Himself, the lesser gods added the mortal part, and are therefore the creators not of our souls, but of our bodies.⁷⁰ Porphyry, however, maintains that, if the soul is to be purified, it must shun all contact with the body.⁷¹ At the same time, he agrees with Plato and the other Platonists in holding that those who have lived intemperate and dishonourable lives return by way of punishment to mortal bodies: to the bodies of beasts in Plato's opinion, and, in Porphyry's, to those of men.⁷² It follows, then, that those whom they would call gods, and whom they encourage us to worship as our parents and makers, are, after all, no more than the forgers of our shackles and chains. They are not our creators, but our jailers and warders, who bind us in a most bitter and grievous house of correction. Let the Platonists therefore either desist from threatening us with our bodies as the punishment of our souls, or cease from preaching that we are to worship as gods those whose work upon us they exhort us to flee and evade by all means in our power.

Both opinions are, however, entirely false. It is false that souls return again to this life to be punished; and it is false that there is

⁷⁰ *Tim.*, 41Cf.

⁷¹ Cf. Bk X, 29; XXII, 26ff.

⁷² Cf. Bk X, 30; XIII, 19.

any other creator of any living thing in heaven or on earth apart from Him Who made heaven and earth. For if we inhabit our body for no other reason than to undergo punishment, why does Plato also say that the world could not have been most beautiful and good had it not been filled with living creatures of all kinds, both mortal and immortal?⁷³ If our creation is a divine blessing even though we are created mortal, how is it a punishment to be restored to a body: that is, to a divine blessing? And if God, as Plato invariably maintains,⁷⁴ contains in His eternal intelligence the ideas both of the whole world and of all species of animals, how, then, should He not create them all Himself? Could it be that He was unwilling to be the Maker of some things even though the art necessary to produce them existed in His mind, ineffable and ineffably worthy of praise?

28 That the whole fullness of the human race began in the first man, and that God then saw which part of it was to be honoured and rewarded, and which part was to be condemned to punishment

Rightly, therefore, does the true religion acknowledge and preach that the God Who created the whole world also created all living beings: that is, souls as well as bodies. Chief among the terrestrial animals, man was made by Him in His own image. For the reason that I have already given, and perhaps for some other and greater reason, he was made one individual; but he was not left solitary. For there is nothing so social by nature as this race, no matter how discordant it has become through its fault; and human nature can call upon nothing more appropriate, either to prevent discord from coming into existence, or to heal it where it already exists, than the remembrance of that first parent of us all. For God chose to create one individual for the propagation of many, so that men should thus be admonished to preserve unity among their whole multitude. Moreover, the fact that the woman was made for him from his side signifies clearly enough how dear the union between a man and his wife should be.⁷⁵

⁷³ Cf. *Tim.*, 30D; 92C.

⁷⁴ Cf. *Tim.*, 30Bff; *Rep.*, 507Bf.

⁷⁵ Gen. 2,22ff; Matt. 19,4ff; Eph. 5,28; 31.

These first works of God are in any case extraordinary because nothing came before them. Those who do not believe in them ought not to believe in any subsequent wonders either; for wonders are so called precisely because they do not arise within an established order of nature. But is it possible that anything should happen in vain within so grand a scheme of divine providence, no matter how hidden its cause? One of the sacred psalmists says, 'Come, behold the works of the Lord, what prodigies He hath wrought in the earth.'⁷⁶ I shall, therefore, with God's help, tell in another place⁷⁷ why God made the woman out of the man's side, and what this first wonder prefigured.

For the time being, however, since we must bring this book to a close, let us merely say that in this first man, who was created in the beginning, there arose – not, indeed, overtly, but in the fore-knowledge of God – the two societies or cities to which the human race belongs. For from that first man all other men were to come forth: some to share with the wicked angels in their punishment, and others to be associated with the good angels in their reward, but all according to the hidden but just judgment of God. His grace cannot be unjust, nor can his justice be cruel, for it is written, 'All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth.'⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Psalm 46, 8.

⁷⁷ Bk XXII, 17.

⁷⁸ Psalm 25, 10.

Book XIII

1 Of the fall of the first human beings, through which mortality was incurred

Now that we have dealt with the most difficult questions concerning the origin of our world and the beginning of the human race, the proper order of the discussion that we have here undertaken requires that we next discuss the fall of the first man – or, rather, of the first human beings – and the origin and propagation of human death. For God did not make men like the angels: that is, in such a way that, even if they sinned, they could not by any means die. Rather, if they discharged the duty of obedience, the reward of an angelic immortality and a blessed eternity was to follow without the intervention of death; but if they disobeyed, they were to be most justly punished with the sentence of death. But of this also we have already spoken in the preceding book.¹

2 Of that death which can befall the soul even though it is to live for ever, and of that to which the body is subject

I see, however, that I must speak somewhat more carefully of the kind of death with which we are here concerned. For although the human soul is truly said to be immortal, it nonetheless also has a certain kind of death of its own. The soul is called immortal, then, because, at least to some extent, it never ceases to live and feel; whereas the body is called mortal because it can be deprived of all life, and cannot, of itself, live at all. The death of the soul therefore occurs when God forsakes it, and that of the body comes when the soul forsakes it. The death of both, then – that is, of the whole man – comes about when the soul, forsaken by God, forsakes the body. For, then, neither does the soul receive life from God, nor the body from the soul.

Moreover, this death of the whole man is followed by that which the authority of the divine eloquence calls the second death.² It is

¹ Bk XII, 22.

² Cf. Rev. 2, 11; 20, 6; 20, 14; 21, 8.

to this that the Saviour refers when He says, 'Fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.'³ This second death does not occur, however, before the soul and body are united so completely that they cannot by any means be separated; and so it may seem strange to say of a body that it has been destroyed when it has not been forsaken by the soul, but is, on the contrary, tormented precisely because given life and sensation by it. For in that last punishment, not only penal but eternal, which we shall discuss more carefully in its proper place,⁴ the soul is rightly said to die, because it draws no life from God; but how can we say that the body is dead, when it derives life from the soul? – for it would not otherwise be able feel the bodily torments which are to come after the resurrection. Is it because life of whatever kind is a sort of good, and pain an evil, that we ought not to say that the body is alive when its soul is not the cause of life, but of pain?

The soul, then, draws life from God when it lives well, for it cannot live well other than by God working in it what is good. But the body draws life from the soul when the soul dwells in the body, whether the soul itself draws its life from God or not. For the life which the ungodly have in their bodies is not a life of the soul, but of the body; and even dead souls – that is, souls which God has forsaken – can confer such life upon bodies, no matter how little they retain of their own life, by virtue of which they are immortal. In the final damnation, however, life is not unjustly called death rather than life. This is so because, even though man does not then cease to feel, his feeling is neither made sweet by pleasure nor wholesome by quietude, but painful by punishment. And this is called the second death because it comes after the first, which brings about the separation of two united natures, whether these be God and the soul, or the soul and the body. Of the first and bodily death, then, it may be said that it is a good for good men and an evil for evil men. The second death, however, since it happens to none of the good, beyond doubt cannot be a good for anyone.

³ Matt 10.28.

⁴ Cf. Bk XIII, 28.

3 Whether death, which has passed into all men because of the sin of our first parents, is the punishment of sin even to the saints

But there now arises a question which we cannot avoid: namely, whether the death by which soul and body are separated is truly a good for good men. For, if it is, how can it also be the punishment of sin? For the first human beings would not have suffered death had they not sinned. How, then, can that be a good for good men which could not have happened except to wicked men? Again, if it could only happen to wicked men, it ought not to be a good for good men, but non-existent to them. For how can anything be a punishment for those in whom there is nothing deserving of punishment?

We must, then, confess that the first human beings were so constituted that, had they not sinned, they would not have experienced any kind of death; but that, having become the first sinners, they were then punished by death in such a way that whatsoever sprang from their stock should also be subject to the same penalty. For nothing could be born of them which was not what they themselves had been. Their nature was changed for the worse in proportion to the condemnation attaching to the magnitude of their sin, so that what arose as a punishment in the first human beings who sinned also follows as a natural consequence in the rest who are born of them.

This comes about because man is not produced by man in the way that he was produced from the dust. For dust was the material out of which man was made, but man is the parent by whom man is begotten. Flesh, then, is not the same thing as earth, even though flesh is made of earth. But man the parent is the same thing as man the offspring. In the first man, therefore, there existed the whole human race which was to pass through the woman into her progeny when that conjugal pair received the divine sentence of its own damnation. And what man became, not when he was created, but when he sinned and was punished: this he propagated, so far as the origin of sin and death are concerned. He himself was not reduced by sin or its punishment to that infantile condition and helpless weakness of mind and body that we see in little children. But God ordained that infants should henceforth be like the young of beasts

in their origin, since their parents had fallen to the level of the beasts in the manner of their life and death. As it is written, 'Man when he was in honour understood not; he became like the beasts that have no understanding.'⁵ Indeed, we see that infants are more feeble in the use and movement of their limbs and in their sense of desire and aversion than even the frailest offspring of other animals.⁶ It is as if the force which dwells in human beings is to rise above that of other animals all the higher, in proportion as its release has been delayed, just as, the further back the bow is bent, the higher the arrow flies.

Despite his unlawful presumption and just condemnation, then, the first man did not fall, and was not thrust, into this rudimentary state of infancy. Human nature was so vitiated and changed in him, however, that he suffered in his members the conflict of disobedient lust, and became bound to the necessity of dying. And what he himself had become as a result of his fault and punishment – that is, subject to sin and death – he reproduced in his offspring. But if infants are released from the bond of sin by the grace of Christ the Mediator, they can suffer only the death which separates soul and body. Being redeemed from the bondage of sin, they do not then pass to that second death, of punishment without end.

4 Why those who are absolved from sin by the grace of regeneration are not also exempted from death: that is, from the punishment of sin

But why, if death is indeed the punishment of sin, do those whose guilt is removed by grace still suffer it? If anyone is disturbed by this, the question has already been treated and resolved in another work which I have written, called *De baptismo parvulorum*. There, it is said that the separation of soul and body was allowed to remain even after its connexion with guilt was removed because otherwise, if the sacrament of regeneration were followed immediately by the immortality of the body, faith itself would be weakened. For faith

⁵ Psalm 49, 12, 20.

⁶ Cf. Augustine, *De bapt. parv.*, 2, 60.

is only faith when it waits in hope for what is not yet seen in substance.⁷

Moreover, it was through the strength and struggle of faith, at least in times gone by, that the fear of death was mastered. This is especially true in the case of the holy martyrs; for they certainly could have won neither victory nor glory in their struggle – because there could not even have been any struggle – if, after the fount of regeneration,⁸ saints could no longer suffer bodily death. Who would not then run with the children yet to be baptised to the grace of Christ, in order not to be parted from the body? For if faith sought and received an immediate reward for its works, it would not be tested by means of an invisible prize, and so it would not even be faith.

Now, however, by the greater and more wondrous grace of the Saviour, even the punishment of sin has been turned to the service of righteousness. For formerly it was said to man, 'If thou sinnest, thou shalt die.' Now, however, it is said to the martyr, 'Die, that thou sin not.' Formerly it was said, 'if ye transgress the commandments, ye shall die the death'; but now it is said, 'If ye refuse death, ye transgress the commandment.' That which was formerly to be feared, that we might not sin, is now to be accepted, lest we sin. Thus, by the ineffable mercy of God, the very punishment of wickedness has itself become the armour of virtue, and the penalty of the sinner is made the reward of the righteous. Then, death was incurred by sinning; now, righteousness is fulfilled by dying. This is true of the holy martyrs, before whom the persecutor places the alternative of betraying the faith or suffering death. For the righteous prefer to suffer by believing what the first sinners suffered by not believing. For unless the latter had sinned, they would not have died; but the former sin if they do not die. The latter died because they sinned, therefore; the former, because they die, do not sin. By the guilt of the latter, punishment came to them; by the punishment of the former, guilt is prevented from coming. It is not that death, having formerly been an evil, has now become something good; rather, God has granted so great a grace to faith that death, which

⁷ *De bapt. parv.*, 3,31; 34; cf. Rom. 8,24; Heb. 11,1.

⁸ Cf. Titus 3,5.

is acknowledged to be the opposite of life, has become the means through which we may pass over into life.

5 That just as the wicked make ill use of the Law,
which is good, so do the righteous make good use of
death, which is an evil

The apostle, when he wished to show how great a force for harm sin is when we lack the aid of grace, did not hesitate to say that the strength of sin is that very Law by which sin is forbidden. 'The sting of death is sin', he says, 'and the strength of sin is the Law'.⁹ This is most certainly true. For prohibition only increases the desire for an unlawful act, if righteousness is not so loved that the desire to sin is vanquished by that love; and we cannot love or take delight in true righteousness unless with the aid of divine grace.¹⁰ But lest the Law should be thought to be an evil because it is called 'the strength of sin', the apostle, dealing with a similar question in another place, says, 'The Law indeed is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is holy made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, worked death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.'¹¹ He says 'exceeding' because the transgression is added to when, because of the increasing desire to sin, the Law itself also comes to be held in contempt. Why have we thought it proper to mention this? Because, just as the Law itself is not an evil when it increases the desire of sinners, so neither is death a good when it increases the glory of those who suffer it: when either the Law is forsaken for the sake of iniquity, and makes transgressors, or death is embraced for the sake of truth, and makes martyrs. And thus the Law is indeed good, because it is a prohibition of sin; and death is evil because it is the wages of sin.¹² But just as the unrighteous make ill use not only of evil things, but of good ones also, so do the righteous make good use not only of good things, but also of evil ones. And so it happens that the wicked

⁹ 1 Cor. 15,56; cf. *De bapt. parv.*, 3,20; *De spiritu et littera*, 6.

¹⁰ Cf. *De spir. et lit.*, 56; 65.

¹¹ Rom. 7,12f.

¹² Cf. Rom. 6,23.

make ill use of the Law, though the Law itself is good; and the good die well, even though death is an evil.

6 Of the evil of death, by which the fellowship of soul and body is sundered, considered generally

As regards the death of the body, then – that is, the separation of the soul from the body – it is a good to no one while those who are said to be dying are suffering it. For a sensation of anguish, contrary to nature, is produced by the force that tears apart the two things which had been conjoined and interwoven during life; and this sensation persists until there is a complete cessation of all that feeling which was present by reason of the union of soul and flesh. All this distress is not infrequently forestalled by one blow to the body, or by a snatching away of the soul, the swiftness of which prevents it from being felt. But whatever it is which, with a grievous sensation, deprives the dying of all feeling, it nonetheless increases the merit of patience when it is endured with godliness and faith. This does not, however, remove the name of punishment from it. Death, generated in unbroken succession from the first man, is beyond doubt the punishment of all who are born of him. But, if it is undergone for the sake of godliness and righteousness, it becomes the glory of those who are born again; and, though death is the wages of sin, it sometimes ensures that no wage is paid to sin.

7 Of the death which the unbaptised suffer for the confession of Christ

For when those who have not received the cleansing water of regeneration nonetheless die for their confession of Christ, their sins are just as effectively forgiven them as they would be if they were washed in the sacred font of baptism.¹³ For He Who said 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God'¹⁴ made an exception in their favour in another passage, where He said, in no less general terms, 'Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father

¹³ Cf. Augustine, *De anima et eius origine*, I, 11

¹⁴ John 3, 5.

which is in heaven.¹⁵ And He says in another place, 'Whoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it.'¹⁶

For this reason, it is written, 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints';¹⁷ for what is more precious than a death by which all a man's offences are forgiven, and his merits abundantly increased? For those who were baptised only when they could defer death no longer, and so departed this life with all their sins blotted out, are not so great in merit as those who did not defer death even though they could have done so: who preferred to end their life by confessing Christ rather than by denying Him in order to come to His baptism. Even if they had denied Christ through fear of death, however, this too would certainly have been forgiven them in that baptism; for in that baptism was forgiven even the frightful crime of those who slew Christ. But how abundantly must the grace of the Spirit, which 'bloweth where it listeth',¹⁸ have been present in these martyrs, who loved Christ so dearly, and with so sure a hope of pardon, that they could not deny Him even in such dire peril of their lives!

Precious, therefore, is the death of the saints, for whom such great grace has been promised and foreshadowed in the death of Christ that they do not hesitate to incur their own death in order to meet Him. For their death demonstrates that what was originally established for the punishment of the sinner has been put to such use that the fruit of righteousness has come forth more abundantly from it. Death is not to be regarded as a good on this account, however; for it has been turned to such advantage not by any force of its own, but by the divine succour. Death was originally established as an object of terror, that sin might not be committed. Now, it must be undergone in order that sin may not be committed, or, if committed, may be blotted out, and the palm of righteousness bestowed upon Him to Whose great victory it is due.

8 That the saints, by undergoing the first death for the sake of truth, are freed from the second death

For if we consider the matter more carefully, we shall see that when a man dies faithfully and gloriously for the truth, he is, in fact,

¹⁵ Matt. 10,32.

¹⁶ Matt. 16,25.

¹⁷ Psalm 116,15

¹⁸ John 3,8.

avoiding death; for he undergoes some part of it precisely in order to avoid the whole of it: the additional second death, which has no end. He undergoes the separation of soul and body lest, when the soul is separated from the body, it is separated also from God: lest, when the man's whole first death is completed, the second death seize him eternally. Therefore, as I have said, death itself is not a good to anyone while it is being suffered by the dying and causing them to die, even though it can be gloriously borne for the sake of retaining or gaining that which is good. As to those of whom we say that they are already dead, however, it is not absurd to say that, in their case, death is an evil to the wicked and a good to the good. For the souls which have been separated from the bodies of the godly are at rest, but those of the ungodly suffer punishment until their bodies rise again: those of the godly to eternal life, and those of the ungodly to the eternal death which is called the second death.¹⁹

9 Whether we should say that the moment of death,
when the sensation of life ceases, occurs in the
experience of the dying or in that of the dead

As to the moment of time when, in the case of good and evil men alike, the soul is separated from the body: should we say that this occurs after death or in death? If after death, then it is no longer death itself which is good or evil, since death is over and past, but the actual life of the soul after it. Death was an evil while it was in being: that is, while it was being suffered by the dying; for the dire and grievous sense of it – an evil which is put to good use by good men – was then present. But, when death is past, how can that which now no longer exists be either good or evil?

Moreover, if we consider the matter more carefully still, it will appear that even the dire and grievous pain which, as we have said, the dying undergo, is not death itself. For they are certainly still alive for as long as they have any sensation; and, if they are still alive, they should therefore be said to be in a state previous to death rather than in death itself. For when death actually comes, it takes away all the bodily sensation which is so grievous while death is approaching. And, for this reason, it is difficult to explain how we can describe as 'dying' those who are not yet dead, but who, with

¹⁹ Cf. Augustine, *Retract.*, I, 14.

death approaching, are in the throes of their last and mortal agony. Nonetheless, they are rightly called dying; for when death, which was approaching, shall have actually come, we can no longer call them dying, but dead.

No one, therefore, is dying unless living. For even he who is so close to the end of his life that he is, as we say, giving up the ghost, is still alive for as long as his flesh does not actually lack the soul. The same person is therefore simultaneously dying and living. He is approaching death and departing from life; but he is still in life, because the soul is still present in his body, and he is not yet in death because his soul has not yet departed from the body. But if, when the soul has departed, the man is still not in death, but after death, who shall say when he is in death? On the one hand, if a man cannot be dying and living simultaneously, then no one can be said to be dying, since, for as long as the soul is in the body, we cannot deny that he is living. On the other hand, if a man in whose body death is already at work should rather be called dying, and if no one can be living and dying simultaneously, I do not know when he is living.

10 Whether the life of mortals should be called death rather than life

For from the very beginning of our existence in this dying body, there is never a moment when death is not at work in us. For throughout the whole span of this life – if, indeed, it is to be called life – its mutability leads us towards death. Certainly, there is no one who is not closer to it this year than he was last year, and tomorrow than today, and today than yesterday, and a little while hence than now, and now than a little while ago. For whatever time we live is subtracted from the whole span of our life, and what remains is becoming smaller and smaller each day. Thus, the whole duration of our life is nothing but a progression towards death. During it, no one is permitted to stand still or to go a little more slowly even for a little while. Rather, all are urged onwards with the same motion and impelled with a rapidity which does not differ for anyone. For he whose life was shorter did not spend any one day more quickly than he whose life was longer. Rather, though the equal moments were snatched from both equally, the one had a

nearer and the other a more remote goal, towards which both were running with equal speed. It is one thing to go by a longer road, and another to walk more slowly. Thus, he who spends a longer time on his way to death does not proceed at a slower pace, but covers more ground.

Again, if every man begins to die – that is, is in death – as soon as death itself has begun to do its work in him, then surely he is in death from the very beginning of his existence in this body. (For death is the taking away of life; and so, when his life has been entirely taken away, he will not then be in death, but after death.) For what else is happening in all his days, hours, and minutes, but the progress of death towards its consummation? And then, when this is fully complete, there begins the time after death, instead of that which we called being in death, when life was being taken away. From the moment he begins to exist in this body, therefore, which is dying rather than living, man is never in life. Or shall we, after all, say that he is in life and death simultaneously? – in life, that is, which he lives until it is entirely taken away, but in death also, which he dies as his life is being diminished? For if he is not in life, what is it that is being taken away until it is entirely consumed? But if he is not in death, what is it that is taking his life away? It is, therefore, not incorrect to say that, when life has been wholly taken away from the body, this is the time after death: precisely because the state of death itself existed during the time when life was being taken away. For if, when life has been taken away, a man is not in death but after death, when will he be in death, if not when life is being taken away?

11 Whether one can be both living and dead simultaneously

But it seems absurd to say that a man is in death before he reaches death; for, if he is already in death, what is it that he is drawing closer to as he passes through the phases of his life? Again, and especially, it seems quite contrary to common usage to say that a man is simultaneously alive and dead, just as it would be to say that he is simultaneously awake and asleep. We must, then, ask when he will be a dying man. For, before death comes, he is not dying, but living; and when death has come, he is not dying but dead: the

former state is before death, therefore, and the latter after death. When, then, is he in death? For then it is that he will be dying. We say, then, that there are three separate times – before death, in death and after death – corresponding to three states: living, dying and dead. And it is very difficult to define when a man is in death or dying: that is, in a state when he is neither living, which is before death, nor dead, which is after death, but dying, which is in death. For while the soul remains in the body, especially if sensation is present also, there is no doubt that the man is alive; for he consists of body and soul. Thus, before death, he cannot be said to be in death; but when, on the other hand, the soul has departed and all bodily sensation has been removed, he is after death: he is dead. Between the two states of being alive and being dead, then, the condition of dying or of being in death disappears. For while a man still lives, he is before death; but if he has ceased to live, he is now after death. He is never dying, therefore: that is, contained in the state of death. So it is also with the passage of time: the present is sought but it is not found, for the transition from future to past occupies no space.

We must, then, take care lest, following this line of reasoning, we say that there is no such thing as bodily death. For, if there is, when is it, if it can be in no one, and no one can be in it? While a man is still alive, death is certainly not yet present; for he is not in death, but in a state before death. If he has already ceased to live, however, death is still not present, for his state is now after death, not in death. Again, if there is no death before or after the cessation of life, what do we mean when we say ‘after death’ or ‘before death’? For if there is no death, it is foolish to say such things. Would that we had led such a good life in Paradise that there truly was no death! Now, however, not only does death indeed exist, but it is so vexatious that it cannot be explained by any kind of speech or evaded by any reasoning.

Let us, therefore, speak in the customary way – for we ought not to do otherwise – and use the phrase ‘before death’ to signify the time before death comes; as it is written, ‘Praise no man before his death.’²⁰ Let us also say, when death has happened, that this or that occurred ‘after the death’ of so and so. Also, let us speak as best we

²⁰ Eccclus. 11,28.

can of the present time, as when we say, 'Dying, he made a will and left this and that to so and so' – though, of course, he certainly could not have done this unless he were alive, and did it before death rather than in death.

Let us also speak as Divine Scripture speaks; for it does not hesitate to say that the dead are not after death, but in death: hence the words, 'For in death there is no remembrance of thee.'²¹ For men are rightly said to be in death until they rise again, just as someone is said to be in sleep until he awakes. However, though we can say of persons in sleep that they are sleeping, we cannot speak in the same way of the dead, and say that they are dying. For, so far as the death of the body is concerned, of which we are now speaking, those who are already separated from their bodies do not continue dying. But this is what, as I said, cannot be explained by any kind of speech: how the dying are said to live, or how, even after death, the dead are said to be in death. For how can they be after death if they are still in death – especially when we do not even say that they are dying, as we say that those in sleep are sleeping, and those who are in weariness are weary, or those in grief, grieving, and those in life, living? For the dead are said to be in death until they rise again, yet they cannot be called dying.

I consider, then, that it has not improperly or inappropriately come about – not by human effort, but perhaps by divine ordinance – that the Latin word *moritur* ['he is dying'] cannot be declined by grammarians according to the rule by which other such words are declined. For from the word *oritur* comes the form *ortus est* in the perfect tense; and all similar verbs form this tense from their perfect participles. But if we seek the perfect tense of *moritur*, the answer is always, *mortuus est*, with a double *u*. For *mortuus* is thus pronounced in the same way as *fatuus*, *arduus*, *conspiciuus*, and similar words, which are not perfect participles, but which, because they are adjectives, are declined without tense. *Mortuus*, however, though in form an adjective, is used as a perfect participle, as if that were to be declined which cannot be declined. And so it has appropriately come about that the verb itself can no more be declined in speech than can the event which it signifies be avoided. Yet, with the help of our Redeemer's grace, we may at least avoid

²¹ Psalm 6,5.

the second death. For that is more grievous still, and the worst of all evils. For it consists not in the separation of soul and body, but in the union of both in eternal punishment. There, by contrast to their present state, men will not be before death or after death, but always in death, and, for that reason, never living, never dead, but endlessly dying. For a man can never be in death in a worse sense than where death itself is without death.

12 With what death God threatened the first human beings if they should transgress His commandment

When, therefore, it is asked with what death it was that God threatened the first human beings if they should transgress the commandment received from Him, and should not continue in obedience – whether with the death of the soul, or of the body, or of the whole man, or with that which is called the second death, we must reply: with all of these. For the first death consists of two deaths; but total death consists of all of them. For just as the whole earth consists of many lands, and the Church universal of many churches, so death universal consists of all deaths. For the first death consists of two, the one of the soul and the other of the body; and so the first death is a death of the whole man, since the soul, without God and without the body, undergoes punishment for a time. But the second death is when the soul, without God but with the body, undergoes eternal punishment.

When, therefore, speaking of the forbidden fruit, God said to the first man whom He had established in Paradise, ‘In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt die the death’,²² this threat included not only the first part of the first death, by which the soul is deprived of God; nor only the second part, by which the body is deprived of the soul; nor only the whole of the first death itself, by which the soul is punished by separation from both God and the body. Rather, it included whatever of death there is, even to that final death which is called second, and which is followed by no other.

²² Gen. 2,17

13 What was the first punishment that the first human beings suffered for their offence?

For, as soon as our first parents had transgressed the commandment, divine grace forsook them, and they were appalled at the nakedness of their own bodies. Thus, they took fig-leaves, which were perhaps the first things to come to hand in their confusion of mind, and covered their shameful parts with them.²³ For though their members remained the same as they were at first, they had not originally been a source of shame to them. They became aware, therefore, of a new stirring of their flesh, which had become disobedient to them as a punishment, in requital of their own disobedience to God.²⁴

For the soul, now taking delight in its own freedom to do wickedness, and disdaining to serve God, was itself deprived of the erstwhile subjection of the body to it. Because it had of its own free will forsaken its superior Lord, it no longer held its own inferior servant in obedience to its will. Nor could it in any way keep the flesh in subjection, as it would always have been able to do if it had itself remained subject to God. Then began the flesh to lust against the Spirit,²⁵ from which conflict we are born. From the first offence of mankind comes the origin of death in us, and we bear in our members, and in our vitiated nature, the striving of the flesh, or, indeed, its victory.

14 Of the nature of man as made by God, and into what condition he fell by the free choice of his own will

For God, Who is the author of nature, and certainly not of vices, created man righteous.²⁶ Man, however, depraved by his own free will, and justly condemned, produced depraved and condemned children. For we were all in that one man, since we all were that one man who fell into sin through the woman who was made from

²³ Gen. 3,7ff.

²⁴ *De bapt. parv.*, 2,36.

²⁵ Gal. 5,17.

²⁶ Cf. Augustine, *De gen. ad lit.*, 1,5.

him before they sinned.²⁷ The particular form in which we were to live as individuals had not yet been created and distributed to us; but the seminal nature from which we were to be propagated already existed. And, when this was vitiated by sin and bound by the chain of death and justly condemned, man could not be born of man in any other condition. Thus, from the evil use of free will there arose the whole series of calamities by which the human race is led by a succession of miseries from its depraved origin, as from a corrupt root, even to the ruin of the second death, which has no end, and from which only those who are redeemed by the grace of God are exempt.

15 That Adam, when he was about to sin, forsook God before he was forsaken by God, and that his falling away from God was the first death of the soul

But since it is said, 'thou shalt die the death', and not 'deaths', let us therefore understand here only that death which occurs when the soul is forsaken by God, Who is its life. For the soul was not forsaken by God first, and so then forsook Him; rather, it first forsook God, and so was then forsaken by Him. For its own will was the originator of its own evil, just as the will of the Creator, both in making it when it did not exist, and in re-making it when it had fallen and perished, is the originator of its good. Let us understand, then, that God gave warning of this death only, and that when He said, 'in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die the death', it is as if He said, 'in the day that you forsake me with disobedience, I shall with justice forsake you'. Even so, in this death were certainly also threatened the other deaths which were without doubt bound to follow it.

For in the disobedient stirring which arose in the flesh of the disobedient soul, by reason of which Adam and Eve covered their shameful parts, one death was indeed experienced: namely, that which occurs when God forsakes the soul. This was signified by the words which God spoke when the man, demented with fear, had hidden himself: 'Adam, where art thou?'²⁸ For God certainly did

²⁷ Cf. *De bapt. parv.*, 3,14.

²⁸ Gen. 3,9.

not ask this in ignorance of Adam's whereabouts, but to admonish him to reflect upon where he was, now that God was no longer with him. But when Adam's soul itself forsook his body, corrupted and decayed with age, there came into the experience of man the other death of which God had spoken while He was still punishing his sin: 'Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.'²⁹ And it is of these two deaths that the first death is made up, which is that of the whole man, and which is at last followed by the second, unless the man be redeemed by grace. For the body, which is made of earth, would not return to the earth except for its own death, which befalls it when it is forsaken by the soul which is its life. Hence, it is therefore agreed among all Christians who truly hold the catholic faith that the death of the body does not come about through the law of nature, by which God ordained no death for man, but is rightly inflicted on us by reason of sin; for God, in punishing his sin, said to the man in whom we were all then contained, 'Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.'

16 Of the philosophers who do not consider that the separation of soul and body is a punishment, even though Plato depicts the supreme God as promising the lesser gods that they will never be deprived of their bodies

But the philosophers against whose calumnies we are defending the City of God – that is, His Church – seem to themselves wise when they mock us because we say that the separation of soul and body is to be considered among its punishments. They do so because they deem that the soul's blessedness is perfected only when it is entirely rid of the body, and returns to God simple and alone and, as it were, naked.³⁰

As to this opinion, if I were to find nothing in their own writings to refute it, I should have to argue all the more painstakingly to demonstrate that it is not the body, but the body's corruptibility, which is a burden to the soul. Hence that verse of Scripture which we quoted in an earlier book: 'For the corruptible body presseth

²⁹ Gen. 3,19.

³⁰ Cf. Plotinus, *Enn.*, 9,6,9.

down the soul.³¹ The word 'corruptible' is here added to show that the soul is pressed down not by the body simply as such, but by the body as it has become by reason of sin and its consequent punishment; and even if this word had not been added, we could not understand the passage in any other way. As it happens, however, Plato declares most plainly that the gods who have been made by the supreme God have immortal bodies, and he depicts that God by Whom they were made as promising them, as a great blessing, that they will abide in their bodies eternally, and never be separated from them by any death. Why is it, then, that, for the sake of vexing the Christian religion, the philosophers pretend not to know what they know, and even prefer to speak against themselves rather than lose an opportunity of contradicting us? Here are Plato's own words, as Cicero has translated them into Latin, in which he introduces the supreme God as speaking to the gods whom He has made, and saying:

You who have sprung from the stock of the gods, give heed. The works of which I am the parent and creator are incapable of dissolution for as long as I will it. Whatever is composed can be undone, but it is by no means good to dissolve that which is joined together by reason. Because you have been originated, you cannot, indeed, be immortal and indestructible. You will, however, certainly not be destroyed, nor shall any doom of death undo you and prove mightier than my purpose, which is a stronger assurance of your perpetuity than those bodies to which you were united when you were begotten.³²

Behold, then: Plato says that the gods are mortal on the one hand, because of the connection of body and soul, yet are on the other hand immortal by the will and purpose of Him by Whom they are made. If, therefore, it is a punishment to the soul to be united with any body whatsoever, why does God speak to them as if they were afraid of dying: that is, of being separated from the body? Why does He give them an assurance of immortality not in virtue of their nature, which is composite and not simple, but by virtue of His own invincible will, by which He has the power to ensure that created things are not destroyed, and that compound things are not dissolved, but endure incorruptibly?

³¹ Wisd. 9,15; cf. Bk XII,16.

³² Cicero, *Timaeus*, 2 (but Augustine's quotation is not accurate); cf. Bk XXII,26.

Whether what Plato says concerning the stars is true or not is another question, however.³³ For we cannot immediately concede that those luminous spheres or globes, which by day or night shine upon the earth with their corporeal light, are animated by intellectual and blessed souls of their own. This is what he does not hesitate to affirm of the universe as a whole, as if it were one great animal, in which all other animals are contained.³⁴ But this, as I have said, is another question, which we have not here undertaken to discuss.

I have now said as much as I have thought it necessary to say against those who glory in being, or in being called, Platonists, and whose pride in this name makes them ashamed to be Christians. For they fear that if they share a name with the vulgar herd, this will detract from the exclusiveness of the fraternity of those who wear the *pallium*,³⁵ whose self-importance is in proportion to their fewness. These men, desiring to have something to condemn in Christian doctrine, attack the eternality of the body. They urge that it is a contradiction for us to seek the blessedness of the soul while at the same time insisting that it will abide eternally in the body; for, they say, the bond that unites the two is one of tribulation. They say this even though Plato, their founder and master, asserts that it was granted by the supreme God as a gift to the gods whom He had made that they should never die: that is, that they should not be separated from the bodies to which he had joined them.

17 Against those who assert that earthly bodies cannot be made incorruptible and eternal

These philosophers also contend that earthly bodies cannot be eternal. They do not doubt, however, that the whole earth itself is eternal, because it is a central and eternal member of their god: not of the supreme God, that is, but of the great god which is this whole world.³⁶ They believe that the supreme God made for them another god – that is, this world – which He placed above the other gods who are beneath Him. They believe also that this god is ani-

³³ *Tim.*, 41D-42A; cf. Augustine, *Serm.*, 241.

³⁴ *Tim.*, 30Cf; 92C.

³⁵ I.e. of the philosophers, who in Augustine's day wore this Greek garment as a sort of uniform. See Aulus Gellius, *Noct. Att.*, 9,2.

³⁶ *Tim.*, 34Af.

mate, having, as they assert, a rational or intellectual soul enclosed within the great mass of its body,³⁷ and having the four elements as the members of this body, established and arranged in their proper places, whose union they insist is indissoluble and eternal, so that this great god of theirs will never die.³⁸ But, in this case, if the earth, which is the central member in the body of a greater creature, is eternal, why should not the bodies of other earthly creatures also be eternal, if God should so will it?

But earth, they say, must return to earth, from which the earthly bodies of animals have been derived.³⁹ This is the reason, they say, for the necessity of dissolution and death; for it is in this way that bodies are restored to the stable and eternal earth from which they have been taken. But what if someone says the same thing of fire, and asserts that the bodies which are derived from it to create celestial beings must be restored to the universal fire: does not the immortality which Plato represents the supreme God as promising to such gods evaporate in the fierceness of this dispute? Or does this not happen to those celestial creatures because God – Whose will, as Plato says, no power can overcome – has willed that it should not do so? In this case, then, what prevents God from causing the same thing to be true of earthly bodies? Plato confesses that God can prevent things that are born from being destroyed, and things that are united from being separated, and things that are derived from the elements from returning to them, and can ordain that souls, once established in their bodies, shall never relinquish them, and shall enjoy eternal blessedness with them.⁴⁰ Why, then, may He not also prevent earthly bodies from dying? Is it that God has power to do nothing that Christians believe, but everything that Platonists wish? Are philosophers, then, able to know the purpose and power of God, whereas the prophets were not? On the contrary: the Spirit of God taught His prophets to proclaim as much of His will as He thought fit to reveal; but when the philosophers sought to discover it, they were deceived by merely human conjecture.

But they should still not have been so far deceived, by either ignorance or obstinacy, as to contradict themselves so blatantly. For,

³⁷ *Tim.*, 30E.

³⁸ *Tim.*, 32Aff.

³⁹ Cf. Cicero, *Tusc. disp.*, 3, 25, 59.

⁴⁰ *Tim.*, 32C-33D.

on the one hand, they use their great powers of disputation to assert that the soul, if it is to be blessed, must be rid not only of its earthly body, but of every kind of body. Yet, on the other hand, they hold that the gods, who have most blessed souls, are nonetheless united with eternal bodies: the celestial gods with fiery ones,⁴¹ and the soul of Jupiter himself (or of this world, as they wish to say) being entirely enclosed in all the corporeal elements which make up the whole mass extending from earth to heaven.⁴² For Plato's opinion is that the soul of Jupiter is diffused and extended by musical numbers from the middle of the inside of the earth, which the geometers call the centre, throughout all its parts to the highest and most distant parts of the heavens.⁴³ On this view, therefore, the world is an animate being, very great, wholly blessed, and eternal, whose soul has the perfect happiness of wisdom, yet never leaves its own body, and whose body receives eternal life from the soul. Moreover, though this body is not itself simple, but composed of so many other great bodies, it cannot weaken the soul or hinder it.

Since, therefore, the philosophers permit their own speculations to be so ambitious, why do they refuse to believe that earthly bodies can be made immortal by the divine will and power, and that souls can live happily and eternally in them without being separated from them by death or pressed down by their weight? Do they not assert that their own gods have bodies of fire, and that Jupiter himself, their king, dwells in all the corporeal elements? If, in order to achieve blessedness, the soul must be rid of every kind of body, let their gods flee from their starry spheres, and let Jupiter flee from earth to sky; or, if they cannot do this, let them be deemed miserable. But these philosophers do not wish to accept either alternative. For they dare not ascribe to their gods a separation from the body, lest they should seem to worship mortals; but neither do they wish to say that the gods lack blessedness, for fear of admitting that they are unhappy. To obtain blessedness, therefore, we need not be rid of every kind of body, but only of the corruptible, irksome, painful, dying body: not of such bodies as the goodness of God made for the first human beings, but only of such as the punishment of sin has imposed upon us.

⁴¹ *Tim.*, 40A.

⁴² *Tim.*, 34A_f.

⁴³ *Tim.*, 35B-36B

18 Of earthly bodies, which the philosophers affirm cannot dwell in the heavens, because whatever is earthly is drawn back to the earth by its own natural weight

But earthly bodies, our adversaries say, are necessarily either bound to the earth by their natural weight, or drawn to earth by it, and therefore cannot be in heaven.⁴⁴ The first human beings were indeed on earth, in a well-wooded and fruitful spot which received the name 'Paradise'. But let them consider this question of earthly weight a little more attentively; for it must be answered if we are to account for the ascension of Christ's body into heaven, and also for the kind of bodies which the saints will have at the resurrection.

For if human art can by some means cause vessels which float to be made out of metals which sink as soon as they are placed in water, how much more credible it is that the hand of God, working in some hidden way, can do the same kind of thing even more effectively! Plato says that, by His almighty will, God can bring it about that things born are not destroyed, and that composite things are not dissolved. Moreover, it is much more marvellous that incorporeal entities are united with bodies than that bodies are joined to other bodies of whatever kind. It is even more certain, then, that God can cause earthly objects to be not drawn downwards by their own weight, and that He can enable souls themselves to dwell in the most perfect blessedness with bodies which, though earthly, are nonetheless now incorruptible: bodies which they can move as they wish, and place where they wish, with the greatest of ease. If the angels do this, and carry off any earthly creatures they please from wherever they please, and set them down wherever they please,⁴⁵ are we to believe that they cannot do this without feeling the burden? Why, then, should we not believe that the spirits of the saints, made perfect and blessed by divine grace, can without any difficulty carry their bodies wherever they wish, and set them down where they wish? It is generally true that, when we carry weights, we feel that the weight of earthly bodies is greater in proportion to

⁴⁴ Cf. Bk XXII, 11; Augustine, *De fide et symbolo*, 13.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Bel and the Dragon*, 36ff.

their size, and that a greater weight is more of a burden than a smaller one. The soul, however, finds the members of its own flesh lighter to bear when they are robust with health, than when they are wasted with illness. And though, when he is being carried by others, the sound and strong man feels heavier than the thin and sickly man, yet the man himself moves and carries his own body with more agility when he is in good health and has the greater stature than when his sturdiness is made very small by hunger or disease. Thus, even when we have our earthly bodies, and even though they are still corruptible and subject to death, what is important is not the weight of their mass, but the state of their constitution. And what words can express how great the difference is between what we now call health and our future immortality? Our faith is not disturbed, therefore, by the arguments which the philosophers derive from the weight of bodies; and I will not even ask them why, when they believe that the whole earth is suspended on nothing, they cannot believe that an earthly body can be in heaven.⁴⁶ Nor do I here consider the argument that the world remains in its central place by the same law that attracts all heavier bodies to its centre.

This I do say, however. Plato asserts that the lesser gods, to whom he entrusts the creation of man and other earthly creatures, are able to remove from fire the quality of burning while leaving behind the quality of brightness by which it is conspicuous to the eyes.⁴⁷ He also concedes to the supreme God the power of preserving from death things that have been born, and from any dissolution things that have been composed of parts so diverse, so dissimilar, as corporeal and incorporeal substances. Are we to doubt, then, that He can take away the corruptibility of the flesh of the man to whom He has given immortality, while leaving behind its nature? Or that He can remove the heaviness of its weight while retaining the harmonious arrangement of its members? But our faith in the resurrection of the dead, and their immortal bodies, are matters which we shall, God willing, discuss more carefully at the end of this work.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Cf. Job 26,7.

⁴⁷ *Tim.*, 41Cf; 45Bf.

⁴⁸ Bk XXII, 12ff; 25ff.

19 Against those who hold that the first human beings would not have been immortal had they not sinned, and who wish to say that souls exist eternally without bodies

Let us now continue with the account that we have begun of the bodies of the first human beings. For these would not have sustained even that death which is a good to good men other than as the just consequence of sin: that death which is not understood and believed in by only a few, but which is known to all, by which soul and body are separated, and by reason of which the body of a creature which was plainly living is now plainly dead. For though it is blasphemous to doubt that the souls of the righteous and godly dead live on in peaceful rest, it would still be much better for them to be alive in healthy bodies.⁴⁹ So true is this that even those who believe that it is most blessed to be rid of every kind of body contradict their own opinion in spite of themselves. For none of them will dare to set wise men, whether yet to die or dead already – that is, whether already rid of the body, or soon to relinquish it – above the immortal gods, to whom the supreme God, according to Plato, promises, as a munificent gift, life indissoluble: that is, a life in eternal union with their bodies. Yet Plato himself thinks that men can receive no higher reward, if they pass through life piously and righteously, than to be separated from their bodies and received into the bosom of those very gods who never forsake their bodies,⁵⁰ 'so that, unremembering, they may again behold the vault on high, and once more desire a return to bodies'.⁵¹ Virgil is congratulated for expressing a Platonic doctrine in these words.

Plato, then, considers that the souls of mortals cannot remain in their bodies for ever, but are necessarily sundered from them by death; and he also thinks that, without bodies, souls cannot endure everlastingly, but pass from life to death and from death to life with ceaseless alternation. He thinks that wise men differ from the rest, however, in that they are borne after death to the stars, so that each may rest for a certain period of time in a star appropriate to him. Then, when he has forgotten his former misery and again conceived

⁴⁹ Cf. *De gen. ad lit.*, 12,68.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Phaedo*, 108c; *Phaedrus*, 248c.

⁵¹ *Aen.*, 6,750f; cf. Bk x,30.

the desire to return to the body, he may thence return to the labours and sorrows of mortal men. Those who have conducted their lives foolishly, however, return in the next cycle into bodies suited to their deserts, whether human or animal.⁵² Thus, Plato has attributed a very harsh condition even to good and wise souls. For they do not have assigned to them bodies with which they can live for ever and immortally; rather, they can neither remain in their bodies permanently, nor abide in eternal purity without them.

In the Christian era, as we have already said in an earlier book,⁵³ Porphyry was ashamed of this Platonic doctrine. Thus, he not only removed human souls from the bodies of beasts, but also held that the souls of the wise are set free from every corporeal tie, and, escaping from all bodies, dwell with the Father in blessedness without end. In order not to seem outdone by Christ's promise of everlasting life to the saints, he also established purified souls in eternal felicity, without any return to their former miseries. But in order to contradict Christ, he denied the resurrection of incorruptible bodies, and asserted that these purified souls will live eternally, not only without earthly bodies, but without bodies of any kind at all.⁵⁴ Notwithstanding this opinion, however, such as it is, he did not teach that these souls should not offer religious observance to the gods who do themselves dwell in bodies. And why did he not do so, unless because he believed that such souls, even when accompanied by no body, are still not superior to the gods? If, therefore, the philosophers will not venture to place human souls above the gods who are most blessed even though eternally united with bodies – and I do not think that they will venture to do this – why does what the Christian faith preaches seem absurd to them: that the first human beings were created in such a way that, if they had not sinned, they would not have been sundered from their bodies by death? Rather, they would have been granted the reward of immortality for maintaining their obedience, and would have lived eternally with their bodies. Further, the saints will at the resurrection possess those very bodies in which they have here laboured; but their condition will then be such that no corruption or distress

⁵² *Phaedrus*, 248A-249D.

⁵³ Bk X, 30.

⁵⁴ Cf. Bk XXII, 27.

will befall their flesh, nor will their blessedness be marred by any sorrow or unhappiness.

20 That the flesh of the saints now resting in hope will be raised to a higher condition than that of the first human beings before they sinned

Moreover, the souls of the departed saints now have no grief over the death by which they were separated from their bodies, because their flesh rests in hope,⁵⁵ no matter what injuries it may be seen to have suffered after all sensation has gone. They do not desire to forget their bodies, as Plato thought. Rather, because they remember what has been promised to them by Him Who fails no one, and Who gave them an assurance that even the hairs of their head are safe,⁵⁶ they look forward longingly and patiently to the resurrection of their bodies, in which they have suffered many hardships, but in which they are never to undergo such things again. For if they did not hate their own flesh⁵⁷ when, in its infirmity, it resisted their will and required to be coerced by the spiritual law, how much more will they love it when it shall even itself have become spiritual! For just as the spirit is not improperly called carnal when it serves the flesh, so shall the flesh rightly be called spiritual when it serves the spirit. This is not because flesh will be converted into spirit, which is what some have inferred from what is written: 'It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.'⁵⁸ Rather, it is because it will be subject to the spirit with a supreme and marvellous readiness to obey, and will fulfil its will in the most assured knowledge of indestructible immortality, with all distress, all corruptibility and all reluctance gone.

For the body will not only be better then than it was here even when in perfect health; it will also be better than those bodies which the first human beings had before they sinned. For, though they were not to die unless they sinned, they nonetheless made use of food as men do now; for their bodies were not yet spiritual, but

⁵⁵ Cf. Psalm 16,9.

⁵⁶ Cf. Luke 21,18.

⁵⁷ Cf. Eph. 5,29.

⁵⁸ 1 Cor. 15,44.

animal and earthly only. Their bodies did not decline into old age, and they were, therefore, not led to the necessity of death; for this condition was granted them by the wondrous grace of God, by means of the tree of life which stood in the midst of Paradise along with the forbidden tree.⁵⁹ They still took other nourishment, however, except from the one tree that had been forbidden – not because it was in itself evil, but in order to commend the good of a pure and simple obedience, which is the great virtue of the rational creature established under the Lord its Creator. For where nothing evil, but only something forbidden, was touched, disobedience alone was the sin.

The first human beings, therefore, were nourished by other fruit, which they consumed so that their animal bodies might not experience the vexation of any hunger or thirst. But they tasted the tree of life so that death might not steal upon them from any direction, and so that they might not be worn out with age and decay after they had run through a certain course of time. They took other fruits as their nourishment; but the tree of life was their sacrament. We may take it, then, that the tree of life was to the corporeal Paradise what the wisdom of God is to the spiritual – that is, the intelligible – Paradise; of which wisdom it is written, ‘She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her.’⁶⁰

21 Of Paradise, in which the first human beings
were: that it can rightly be understood as having a
certain spiritual significance without prejudice to the
truth of the historical narrative regarding its
corporeal location

There are not a few people, however, who for this reason regard as figurative the whole account of Paradise where, according to the truth narrated in Holy Scripture, the first human beings, the parents of the human race, were. They turn all its trees and fruit-bearing plants into virtues and habits of life, as if they were not visible and corporeal objects, but were only so spoken or written of in order to convey symbolic meanings.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Cf. *De gen. ad lit.*, 6,36.

⁶⁰ Prov. 3,18.

⁶¹ Cf. Augustine, *De haer.*, 59.

But to say that there could not have been a corporeal Paradise because it can also be understood in a spiritual sense is like saying that Abraham did not have two wives, Hagar and Sarah, and two sons by them, one by the maidservant and the other by the free woman, because the apostle says that two covenants were prefigured in them.⁶² Again, it is like saying that water never flowed from the rock when Moses struck it, because the symbol of Christ can also be seen in it; for the same apostle says, 'and that Rock was Christ'.⁶³ No one, then, forbids us to understand Paradise as an allegory of the life of the blessed. Its four rivers signify the four virtues, prudence, fortitude, temperance and justice; its trees, all useful learning; its fruits, the conduct of the godly; the tree of life, wisdom herself, the mother of all goods; and the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the experience that comes with the transgression of a commandment. For the punishment which God appointed for sinners was in itself just, and therefore good; but it is not for his own good that man experiences it.

These things can also be understood to refer to the Church, so that we may more profitably take them as prophecies pointing ahead towards things to come. Thus, Paradise is the Church, as we read of her in the Song of Songs;⁶⁴ the four rivers of Paradise are the four gospels; the fruit-bearing trees are the saints, and the fruit of them is their works; the tree of life is the Holy of Holies, even Christ; the tree of knowledge of good and evil is our possession of free will. For if a man holds the will of God in contempt, he can indeed only do himself harm; and so he learns that there is a difference between cleaving to that Good which is common to all and delighting in his own good. For he who loves himself is abandoned to himself, so that, when he is thereby overwhelmed with fears and sorrows, he may, if he is still able to feel his own woes, sing in the words of the psalm, 'My soul is cast down within me',⁶⁵ and, when corrected, may say, 'I shall keep my strength for Thee.'⁶⁶ No one, then, forbids us to understand Paradise according to these, and perhaps other, more appropriate, allegorical interpretations, while also

⁶² Cf. Gal. 4,22ff; Gen. 16,4; 21,2.

⁶³ Cf. 1 Cor. 10,4; Exod. 17,6; Num. 20,11.

⁶⁴ Song of Songs 4,12ff.

⁶⁵ Psalm 42,6.

⁶⁶ Psalm 59,9.

believing in the truth of that story as presented to us in a most faithful narrative of events.⁶⁷

22 Of the bodies which the saints will have after the resurrection, which will be spiritual, although their flesh will not be changed into spirit

The bodies which the righteous will have after the resurrection, then, will need no tree to guard them against death from sickness or old age, nor other corporeal food to protect them from any kind of hunger or thirst. For they will be endued with the reward of an immortality so certain, and so inviolable in every way, that they will not eat except when they wish, having the power to do so, but no need.

So it was also with the angels when they appeared in visible and tangible form. They took food not because they had any need of it, but because they wished to perform their service to men in an appropriately human fashion, and had the power to do this; for we are not to believe that, when men received them as guests, the angels ate only in appearance. Indeed, to any who did not know them to be angels, it might seem that they ate from a necessity similar to our own. This is why the angel said in the Book of Tobit, 'You saw me eat, but it was with your eyes that you saw':⁶⁸ that is, You thought that I, like you, took food for the sake of restoring my body.

But even if it might seem more plausible to argue in favour of another view in the case of the angels, the Christian faith certainly leaves no room for doubt as to the Saviour Himself: that even after the Resurrection, when He was now in spiritual, yet nonetheless real, flesh, He took food and drink with His disciples.⁶⁹ For it is not the power of eating and drinking, but the need to do so, which is removed from such spiritual bodies. Hence, they will be spiritual not because they will cease to be bodies, but because they will be sustained by a quickening Spirit.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Cf. *De gen. ad lit.*, 8,1.

⁶⁸ Tobit 12,19.

⁶⁹ Cf. Luke 24,43; Acts 10,41.

⁷⁰ Cf. 1 Cor 15,45.

23 What we are to understand concerning the animal
and spiritual body; and who they are who die in
Adam and are made alive in Christ

For just as those bodies which possess a living soul, though not as yet a quickening spirit, are said to be soul-endowed bodies, but are nonetheless bodies rather than souls, so also those bodies are called spiritual (though God forbid that we should believe that they will be spirits rather than bodies) which, possessing a quickening spirit, have the substance of flesh, but not its heaviness and corruption. Man will then not be earthly, but heavenly: not because his body, which was made of earth, will no longer be itself, but because, by heaven's gift, it will have been made fit to dwell in heaven: not by losing its nature, but by changing its quality. The first man, 'of the earth, earthy', was made a living soul, not a quickening spirit;⁷¹ for the latter condition was reserved for him as a reward of obedience. His body therefore had need of food and drink in order not to be weakened by hunger and thirst, and it possessed no absolute and indestructible immortality. Rather, protected as it was from the necessity of dying by the tree of life, and thus maintained in the flower of youth, it was beyond doubt an animal rather than a spiritual body. It would, however, not have died had not man, by offending, incurred the vengeance of which God had forewarned him. And though he was indeed not denied nourishment even outside Paradise, yet, being forbidden the tree of life, he was handed over to the wasting of time and old age, at least in respect of that life which, had he not sinned, he could have retained perpetually in Paradise, albeit only in an animal body until it should have been made spiritual as a reward for his obedience.

Suppose, then, we understand that when God said, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die the death', He also meant this to signify death in the obvious sense of the separation of soul and body. Even so, it ought not to seem absurd that the first human beings were not, in fact, sundered from their bodies on the day that they took the forbidden and deathly fruit. For on that day their nature was indeed changed for the worse and vitiated, and by their most just separation from the tree of life they were made subject to

⁷¹ 1 Cor. 15,45ff.

the necessity of bodily death also, under which necessity we are born. The apostle therefore does not say, 'The body will die because of sin.' Rather, he says, 'The body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.' He then goes on, 'But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.'⁷² Therefore, the body will then be to its quickening spirit what it is now to its living soul. And yet the apostle calls it dead because it is already bound by the necessity of dying. In Paradise, however, it was possessed of a living soul, even though not of a quickening spirit, in such a way that it could not rightly be called dead, for it could not fall under the necessity of death except by the commission of sin.

But when God said 'Adam, where art thou?', He signified by this the death of the soul, which comes about when He forsakes it; and when He said 'Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return', He signified the death of the body, which comes about when the soul departs from it. He said nothing of the second death, therefore; and we must believe that this is because He wished to keep it hidden until the dispensation of the New Testament, where it is declared most plainly.⁷³ He did this in order to demonstrate, first of all, that the first death, which is common to all men, was brought about by that sin which, in one man, became common to all. The second death, however, is not common to all men; for, by the grace of God, through a Mediator, He has redeemed from the second death those who were 'Called according to His purpose', as the apostle says. 'For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.'⁷⁴

The apostle says, therefore, that the first man was made an animal body. For, wishing to distinguish the animal body which we have now from the spiritual one which we shall have at the resurrection, he says, 'It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.' Then, to prove this, he says, 'There is a natural body, and

⁷² Rom. 8,10f.

⁷³ Cf. Rev. 2,11; 20,6, 20,14; 21,8.

⁷⁴ Rom. 8,28f.

there is a spiritual body.' And, in order to show what the animal body is, he says, 'Thus it was written, The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.'⁷⁵ In this way, then, he wished to show what the animal body is, even though Scripture did not say of the first man, who was called Adam, when his soul was created by the breath of God, 'And man was made an animal body', but, 'man was made a living soul'.⁷⁶ By what is written, therefore, 'The first man was made a living soul', the apostle wishes man's animal body to be understood. On the other hand, he shows us how he wishes the spiritual body to be understood when he adds, 'But the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.' Here, he is beyond doubt referring to Christ, Who has so risen from the dead that He cannot die again. He then goes on to say, 'But that was not first which was spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.' And here he declares much more clearly that he was referring to the animal body when he wrote that the first man was made a living soul, and to the spiritual when he said that the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. For the animal body is the first: the kind of body that the first Adam had, although it would not have died had he not sinned. This is also the kind of body that we have now, although, after Adam sinned, its nature was so changed and vitiated by sin that we now stand under the necessity of death. It is also the kind of body which Christ Himself deigned to assume for us at first: not, indeed, of necessity, but of choice. Afterwards, however, comes the spiritual body, which Christ Himself, as our Head, already has; and this is the kind of body which His members will have at the final resurrection of the dead.⁷⁷

The apostle then adds a most evident difference as between these two men, saying, 'The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.'⁷⁸ The apostle puts it in this way so that the sacrament of regeneration may indeed now be per-

⁷⁵ 1 Cor. 15,42ff.

⁷⁶ Gen. 2,7.

⁷⁷ Cf. Eph. 4,15; 1 Cor. 12,27.

⁷⁸ 1 Cor. 15,47ff.

formed in us, just as he elsewhere says, 'As many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ.'⁷⁹ But this will be perfected in us in truth only when that which is animal in us by our birth shall have been made spiritual by our resurrection. For, to make use of his own words again, 'We are saved by hope.'⁸⁰

Now we bear the image of the earthy man by the propagation of sin and death which passes into us through our birth; but we bear the image of the heavenly man by the grace of pardon and life everlasting bestowed upon us only by regeneration through the Man Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and men.⁸¹ He it is Whom the apostle intends us to understand as the heavenly man, because He came from heaven to be clothed with a body of earthly mortality, that He might clothe it with heavenly immortality. And the apostle speaks of others who are heavenly also, because these become Christ's members through grace, so that Christ may be made one with them, as head and body are one.⁸² In the same epistle he puts this still more clearly: 'Since by man came death, by Man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive'⁸³ – shall, that is, then indeed be in a spiritual body, which shall be made a quickening spirit. This is not to say that all who die in Adam are to become members of Christ; for by far the greater number of them will be stricken with the second death, which is eternal. Rather, the apostle uses the word 'all' in both clauses because, just as no one dies in an animal body except in Adam, so no one is made alive in a spiritual body except in Christ.

We are, therefore, by no means to suppose that, at the resurrection, we shall have a body like that of the first man before he sinned. Nor are we to understand the words, 'As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy' as denoting a condition of the body brought about by the commission of sin. For we are not to suppose that Adam had a spiritual body before he sinned, and that this was changed into an animal body as a punishment for sin. If this be thought, too little heed has been paid to the words of so great a

⁷⁹ Gal. 3,27.

⁸⁰ Rom. 8,24.

⁸¹ Cf. 1 Tim. 2,5.

⁸² Cf. Rom. 12,5; 1 Cor. 12,27; Eph. 5,30.

⁸³ 1 Cor. 15,21f.

teacher, who says, 'There is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body; as it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul.' It certainly was not brought about only after Adam's sin that he was made a living soul; for this was the original condition of man, concerning which the most blessed Paul draws his testimony from the Law to show what the animal body is.

24 How we are to understand that breathing of God
by which the first man was made a living soul, and
that of the Lord when He said to His disciples,
'Receive ye the Holy Spirit'

Certain persons seem also to have given too little consideration to the following verse: 'God breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul';⁸⁴ which they take to mean not that a soul was then first given to man, but that a soul which was already present was quickened by the Holy Spirit.⁸⁵ They are prompted to think this by the fact that, after His resurrection from the dead, the Lord Jesus breathed on His disciples, saying, 'Receive ye the Holy Spirit.'⁸⁶ They assume that the same thing was done in the latter as in the former case: that it is as if the evangelist had gone on to say, 'And they became living souls.' If the evangelist had indeed said this, we should understand him to mean that the Spirit is in some way the life of souls, and that, without it, rational souls must be deemed dead, even though their presence is seen to give life to bodies. But that this is not what happened when man was created is sufficiently attested by the words of the Bible itself; for it says, 'And God formed man of the dust of the ground.'⁸⁷ Certain persons who consider that this should be translated more clearly have said, 'And God created man from the clay of the earth', because it had already been said that 'there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground';⁸⁸ and it seems that, from this, we are to understand that man was made of clay: compounded, that is, of mist and earth. Immediately after this, according to those Greek manuscripts from which the passage has

⁸⁴ Gen. 2,7.

⁸⁵ Cf. Augustine, *De gen. contra Man*, 2,8,11.

⁸⁶ John 20,22.

⁸⁷ Gen. 2,7.

⁸⁸ Gen. 2,6.

been translated into Latin, comes the statement, 'And God formed man of the dust of the ground.' It does not really matter whether the Greek word *eplasen* is translated as 'created' or 'formed'; although 'formed' is, on the whole, more correct. But those who have preferred to say 'created' have done so in order to avoid ambiguity; for, in the Latin language, it is a more common usage to say that something is 'formed' when it is contrived for some dishonest purpose.⁸⁹

This man, then, who was formed from the dust of the earth, or (because the dust was moistened) from clay – this 'dust of the ground', I say, to speak in exactly the way that Scripture does – was made, as the apostle teaches, an animal body when he received a soul. He was 'made a living soul'; that is, this fashioned dust was made a living soul.

But, some say, he already had a soul: otherwise, he would not have been called a man. For man is not a body alone nor a soul alone; rather, he is composed of both soul and body. It is indeed true that the soul is not the whole man, but the better part of man, and that the body is not the whole man, but the inferior part of man; and it is when both are joined together that they receive the name of man. Neither part, however, loses the name of man even when each is spoken of singly. For who, in everyday speech, is prohibited from saying, 'That man is dead, and is now at rest or in torment', even though this may be said only of the soul; or 'he is buried in such and such place', even though this can apply only to the body? Will anyone say that Divine Scripture does not adopt this customary form of speech? On the contrary, so closely does it agree with us in this respect that even when body and soul are united and a man is alive, it calls each of them singly by the name 'man', calling the soul the 'inward man' and the body the 'outward man', as if there were two men even though both parts together make one man.⁹⁰

We must, however, understand what is meant when it is said that man is both made in the image of God, and yet is dust, and is doomed to return to dust. The first statement refers to the rational

⁸⁹ Augustine is here referring to the fact that the Latin verb *ingere* can mean 'to forge', 'to fake', 'to counterfeit'. According to the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, this is not a particularly common meaning; but Augustine perhaps has spoken rather than written usage in mind.

⁹⁰ 2 Cor. 4,16.

soul, which God implanted in man – that is, in man's body – by breathing it into him, or, to speak more appropriately, by His inspiration. The second statement, however, refers to his body, which God formed from the dust, and to which the soul was given so that it might become a living body: that is, so that man might be made a living soul.

Therefore, when the Lord breathed on the disciples, saying, 'Receive ye the Holy Spirit', He certainly wished it to be understood that the Holy Spirit is not only the Spirit of the Father, but also the Spirit of the only-begotten Son Himself.⁹¹ For the same Spirit is indeed the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, with Whom it forms the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit: it is not a creature, but the Creator. Again, the corporeal breath which proceeded from the mouth of Christ's flesh was not the actual substance and nature of the Holy Spirit; rather, it was, as I have said, a sign whereby we might better understand that the Holy Spirit is common to both Father and Son. For they do not each have a separate Spirit; rather, the same Spirit belongs to both.

Now this Spirit is always spoken of in Holy Scripture by the Greek word *pneuma*; and this is what Jesus called it in the passage just cited, when He bestowed it upon His disciples, signifying this by the breath of His bodily mouth. There does not occur to me any place in the whole of Divine Scripture where any other term is used. But at the place where it says, 'And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed' (or 'inspired') 'into his nostrils the breath of life', the Greek text does not say *pneuma*, the usual word for the Holy Spirit, but *pnoe*, a name more frequently given to a creature than to the Creator. For the sake of clarity, therefore, not a few Latin translators have preferred to render *pnoe* by the word 'breath' rather than 'spirit'. For the same word also occurs in the Greek text of Isaiah, at that place where God says, 'I have made all breath', meaning, no doubt, all souls.⁹² The Greek word *pnoe*, then, is sometimes rendered as 'breath', sometimes as 'spirit', sometimes as 'inspiration', and sometimes as 'aspiration', even when it is used of God. *Pneuma*, however, is never rendered as anything except 'spirit', whether of man, as when the

⁹¹ Cf. Augustine, *De Trin.*, 15,47; *In evangelium Iohannis tractatus*, 99,6,8.

⁹² Is. 57,16 (LXX).

apostle says, 'For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?'⁹³ or of beast, as in the Book of Solomon: 'Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?'⁹⁴ *Pneuma* is also used of the corporeal 'spirit' which is called wind; for this is the name given to it in the psalm, where it says, 'Fire and hail; snow and vapour; spirit of the tempest'.⁹⁵ Also, it is used of that Spirit which is not a creature, but the Creator, of which the Lord said in the Gospel, 'Receive ye the Holy Spirit', signifying this by the breath of his bodily mouth. So too where He says, 'Go ye and baptise all nations in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit':⁹⁶ words by which the Trinity itself is most excellently and clearly denoted; and where we read, 'God is a spirit',⁹⁷ and in many other places in the sacred writings. In all these quotations from the Scriptures, we do not find the word *pnoe* written in the Greek text, but *pneuma*; and, in the Latin, not *flatus* but *spiritus*. Thus, as to the text, 'He breathed' – or, to speak more correctly, 'inspired' – 'into his face the breath of life': even if the Greek text did not here use the word *pnoe* (as we read that it does) but *pneuma*, we should still not be compelled to take this expression as necessarily denoting the Creator Spirit which, in the Trinity, is properly called the Holy Spirit; for, as has been said, it is clear that *pneuma* is customarily used not only of the Creator, but of the creature also.

But, our adversaries say, when Scripture used the term 'breath', it would not have added the words 'of life' unless it wished us to understand this expression to denote the Holy Spirit. Again, when it said, 'man became a soul', it would not have added the word 'living' for any other reason than to signify the life of the soul which is divinely imparted to it by the gift of the Spirit of God. For since, they say, the soul is alive by virtue of a kind of life peculiar to itself, what need was there to add the word 'living', if not to indicate that we are to understand by this the life which is given to it by the Holy Spirit? What is this, however, but diligence in defending human conjecture and negligence in attending to Holy Scripture? Without

⁹³ 1 Cor. 2,11.

⁹⁴ Eccl. 3,21.

⁹⁵ Psalm 148,8.

⁹⁶ Matt. 28,19.

⁹⁷ John 4,24.

going too far afield, would it have been a great effort for them to read, a little earlier in the same book, when all the terrestrial animals were created, the words, 'Let the earth bring forth the living soul'?⁹⁸ Again, would it have been a great effort for them to notice what is written somewhat later, but still in the same book, when we are told that all the creatures which lived on the earth perished in the Flood? – 'All in whose nostrils was the spirit of life, of all that was in the dry land, died.'⁹⁹

We find, therefore, that it is the custom of Divine Scripture to speak of both the 'living soul' and the 'spirit of life' even in the case of beasts. Moreover, in the place where we read, 'All in whose nostrils was the spirit of life', the word *pnoe* is used rather than *pneuma*. Why, then, may we not ask what need there was to add 'living', since the soul cannot exist without being alive? Or, again, what need was there to add 'of life' after the word spirit? The answer is that, on the one hand, we understand it when Scripture uses the expressions 'living soul' and 'spirit of life' as a matter of course when it wishes us to understand animals: that is, animal bodies in which the soul is present as the seat of the body's sensation; but, on the other, we forget this customary mode of speech when it comes to the creation of man: when Scripture wishes us to understand that man received a rational soul which was not brought forth out of the waters and the earth like the other creatures, but created by the breath of God. Yet man was made in such a way that his soul was to live in an animal body, just like those other animals of which Scripture says, 'Let the earth produce every living soul', and of which it also says that the spirit of life is in them; and, again, it is not the word *pneuma* that is here used, but *pnoe*: a word which certainly denotes not the Holy Spirit, but their soul.

Moreover, our adversaries say that, if God's breath is understood to have come from God's mouth, and if we are to believe that this is the soul, then we must acknowledge that the soul is of the same substance as, and therefore equal to, that Wisdom which says, 'I have come out of the mouth of the Most High.'¹⁰⁰ Wisdom, however, says that it has 'come out' of the mouth of God, not that it has been breathed forth from it. Moreover, just as, when we breathe, we

⁹⁸ Gen. 1,24.

⁹⁹ Gen. 7,22.

¹⁰⁰ Eccles. 24,3.

can make breath not out of our own nature as men, but out of the air around us, which we draw in and breathe out by inhaling and exhaling, so almighty God was able to make breath not out of His own nature, nor out of some created thing set under Him, but even out of nothing. And it is most fittingly said that He inserted this breath into the body of the man by inspiring or breathing it into him. This breath was incorporeal, just as God is incorporeal; but, whereas He is immutable, it is mutable, for it was created, whereas He is uncreated. As to those who wish to quote the Scriptures without paying attention to what the Scriptures say: let them know that it is not only what is equal and consubstantial with God that is said to proceed out of His mouth – let them hear or read what God says: ‘So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit thee out of my mouth!’¹⁰¹

We have no reason, then, to resist what the apostle says when he so clearly distinguishes the animal body from the spiritual: that is, the body which we have now from that which we are to have in the future. He says,

It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.¹⁰²

But we have already spoken above of all these words of the apostle.

The animal body, then, in which, as the apostle says, the first man Adam was made, was not made in such a way that it could not die at all, but in such a way that it would not die unless he sinned. But that body which is to be made spiritual and immortal by the quickening spirit will be entirely unable to die. It is in this respect like the soul. For the soul, though it may be said to die by sin, and though it does lose a certain life of its own, namely, the Spirit of

¹⁰¹ Rev. 3, 16.

¹⁰² 1 Cor. 15, 44ff.

God, by Whom it was enabled to live wisely and blessedly, nonetheless does not cease to live a kind of life, albeit a miserable one, for it was created immortal. So it is also with the rebellious angels. By sinning, they did in a sense die, because they forsook God, the fountain of life by virtue of which, while they drank from it, they were able to live wisely and well; yet they could not die so completely as to cease in every way from living and feeling, for they were created immortal. And they will not lack life and sensation even after the final judgment, when they are flung into the second death, for they will then suffer torment. But those men who belong to the grace of God, and are fellow-citizens of the holy angels who have remained in their blessed life, will be so endued with spiritual bodies that they will never again sin or die. They will be invested with an immortality like that of the angels, which cannot be taken away from them even through sin. The nature of their flesh will remain the same, but with no fleshly corruption and heaviness remaining.

But now comes the following question, which it is necessary for us to consider and, with the help of the Lord God, to resolve. If lust arose in the disobedient members of the first human beings because of their sin, and only when divine grace forsook them; and if it was then that their eyes were opened to their nakedness, so that they became more aware of it; and if they then covered their shameful parts because the shameless stirrings of those parts were not subject to the control of their will: how, in that case, would they have begotten offspring if they had remained as they were created, without sin? We must bring this book to a close, however, and so large a subject cannot be treated in so narrow a compass. We will, therefore, defer it to the following book, where it will be treated more appropriately.

Book xiv

1 That all men would have been plunged into an everlasting second death by the sin of the first man, had not God's grace redeemed many

As I have already said in the preceding books,¹ God chose to create the human race from one single man. His purpose in doing this was not only that the human race should be united in fellowship by a natural likeness, but also that men should be bound together by kinship in the unity of concord, linked by the bond of peace. And the individual members of this race would not have been subject to death, had not the first two – one of whom was created from no one, and the other from him – merited it by their disobedience. So great was the sin of those two that human nature was changed by it for the worse; and so bondage to sin and the necessity of death were transmitted to their posterity.

Now the sway of the kingdom of death over men was so complete that all would have been driven headlong, as their due punishment, into that second death to which there is no end, had not some of them been redeemed by the unmerited grace of God. Thus it is that, though there are a great many nations throughout the world, living according to different rites and customs, and distinguished by many different forms of language, arms and dress, there nonetheless exist only two orders, as we may call them, of human society; and, following our Scriptures, we may rightly speak of these as two cities.² The one is made up of men who live according to the flesh, and the other of those who live according to the spirit. Each desires its own kind of peace, and, when they have found what they sought, each lives in its own kind of peace.

2 That life according to the flesh is to be understood as arising not only from the faults of the body, but also from those of the mind

First, therefore, we must see what it is to live according to the flesh and according to the spirit. For anyone who takes what we have

¹ Bk xii, 22; 28.

² Cf. Eph. 2, 19; Phil. 3, 20.

just said at face value may err, either because he does not remember how Holy Scripture uses this manner of speaking, or because he pays too little heed to it. On the one hand, he may certainly suppose that the Epicurean philosophers live according to the flesh; for they place man's highest good in the pleasure of the body. And he may suppose that the same is true of the other philosophers who hold in some way that the good of the body is man's highest good. And he may also suppose that it is true of the common people: of those who subscribe to no doctrine, who do not practise any kind of philosophy, but who, having a leaning towards lust, know no delight except that derived from the pleasure which they receive through the senses. On the other hand, he may suppose that the Stoics, who place man's highest good in the mind,³ live according to the spirit; for what is man's mind if not spirit? In fact, however, it is clear that all of these live according to the flesh in the sense intended by Divine Scripture when it uses the expression.

For Scripture does not use the term 'flesh' to mean only the body of an earthly and mortal creature, as when it says: 'All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.'⁴ On the contrary, there are many other ways in which it uses the term, to signify different things. And among these various usages is that by which man himself – that is, the nature of man – is designated by 'flesh': a manner of speaking in which the whole is represented by a part; for example, 'By the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified.'⁵ For what does the apostle wish us to understand by this if not 'no man'? This is made clearer a little later, where he says, 'No man is justified by the Law';⁶ and, in the Epistle to the Galatians, he says: 'Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law'.⁷

According to this, we interpret the words 'And the Word was made flesh'⁸ to mean that Christ became man. Certain persons who have not rightly understood this passage have supposed that Christ

³ Cf. Cicero, *Tusc. disp.*, 4,15,34; *Acad. post.*, 1,10,38.

⁴ 1 Cor. 15,39.

⁵ Rom. 3,20.

⁶ Gal. 3,11; not Romans, as Augustine seems to think.

⁷ Gal. 2,16.

⁸ John 1,14.

was without a human soul.⁹ But just as, when we read in the Gospel the words of Mary Magdalene, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him',¹⁰ the whole is signified by the part, for she spoke only of the flesh of Christ, which she thought had been taken away from the sepulchre in which it was buried; so too the whole is signified by the part when the word 'flesh' is used but 'man' is meant, as in the instances given above.

The ways in which the Divine Scriptures use the word 'flesh', then, are very numerous, and it would take too long to examine and collect them all. Our present purpose is to discover the meaning of life 'according to the flesh', which is clearly an evil, even though the nature of flesh is not evil in itself. Let us, then, diligently examine that passage in the epistle which the apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians, where he says:

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.¹¹

If we give to the whole of this passage of the apostle's epistle as much consideration as our present question is found to require, we shall be able to solve the question of what it is to live according to the flesh. For among the 'works of the flesh' which he says are 'manifest', and which he enumerates and condemns, we find not only those which pertain to the pleasures of the flesh, such as fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, drunkenness and revellings, but also those which demonstrate vices of the mind and which have nothing to do with fleshly pleasure. For when it comes to idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies: who does not see that these are vices of the mind rather than of the body? It may be, indeed, that a man tempers his desire for bodily pleasure out of devotion to a idol, or because of some heretical error.¹² Even such a man as this, though he is seen to

⁹ Cf. Augustine, *De haer.*, 49; 55; Epiphanius, *Adv. haer.*, 69,49.

¹⁰ John 20,13.

¹¹ Gal. 5,19ff.

¹² Cf. Augustine, *In evang. Iohann.*, 13,13.

restrain and suppress the lusts of the flesh, is still convicted, on the authority of the apostle, of living according to the flesh; yet it is his very abstinence from the pleasures of the flesh that demonstrates that he is engaged in the damnable works of the flesh.

Who can feel hatred except in the mind? Would anyone, speaking to an enemy, or to someone who he thinks is his enemy, say, 'Your flesh is ill disposed towards me', rather than 'Your mind'? Finally, just as, if anyone heard of 'carnalities' (if there were such a word), he would undoubtedly attribute them to the flesh [*caro*], so no one doubts that 'animosities' pertain to the mind [*animus*]. Why, then, does the 'teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity'¹³ give the name 'works of the flesh' to all these and similar failings? Simply because, using that figure of speech by which the whole is signified by a part, he intends the word 'flesh' to be understood as meaning 'man'.

3 The cause of sin proceeds from the soul, not the flesh; and the corruption resulting from sin is not itself a sin, but a punishment

Now someone may say that the flesh is the cause of moral evils of every kind, because it is thanks to the influence of the flesh that the soul lives as it does. But he who says this has not considered the whole nature of man with sufficient care. For 'the corruptible body presseth down the soul'.¹⁴ Hence also the apostle, speaking of this corruptible body, first says, 'Our outward man perisheth',¹⁵ and then goes on to say,

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.¹⁶

¹³ 1 Tim. 2,7.

¹⁴ Wisd. 9,15.

¹⁵ 2 Cor. 4,16.

¹⁶ 2 Cor. 5,1ff.

We are pressed down by the corruptible body, therefore, yet we know that the cause of our being pressed down is not the nature and substance of the body, but its corruption; and, knowing this, we do not wish to be divested of the body, but to be clothed with its immortality. For there will still be a body then; but, because it will not be corruptible, it will not be a burden. At the present time, therefore, 'the corruptible body presseth down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth upon many things'. Nonetheless, those who suppose that the ills of the soul derive from the body are in error.

Virgil, it is true, seems to be expounding Platonic teaching in his magnificent verse when he says, 'The force of those seeds is fiery, and their source is heavenly, to the extent that they are not impeded by harmful bodies nor enfeebled by earthly limbs and dying members.'¹⁷ Also, he wishes us to understand that the body is the source of all four of the most notable disturbances of the mind: desire, fear, joy and grief, which are the origin, as it were, of all sins and vices.¹⁸ And so he adds: 'Hence come desire and fear, gladness and sorrow; nor do they look up to heaven, but are confined in dark and sightless cave.' Our faith, however, is something very different. For the corruption of the body, which presseth down the soul, was not the cause of the first sin, but its punishment; nor was it corruptible flesh that made the soul sinful, but the sinful soul that made the flesh corruptible.

Thus, though this corruption of the flesh results in some incitements to sin and in sinful desires themselves, we still must not attribute to the flesh all the vices of a wicked life. Otherwise, we should absolve the devil from all such vices, since he has no flesh. Certainly, we cannot say that the devil is a fornicator or a drunkard, or that he commits any other such vice pertaining to the pleasures of the flesh, even though it is he who secretly tempts and incites us to such sins. He is, however, supremely proud and envious; and these vices of pride and envy have so possessed him that he is doomed by them to eternal punishment in the prison of this murky air of ours.¹⁹

¹⁷ *Aen.*, 6,730ff; cf. *Phaedrus* 245E–250E.

¹⁸ Cf. Cicero, *Tusc. disp.*, 3,11,24; 4,6,11f.

¹⁹ Cf. Augustine, *De natura boni contra Manichaeos*, 33

Now those vices which hold sway over the devil are attributed by the apostle to the flesh, even though it is certain that the devil does not have any flesh. For the apostle says that hatred, variance, jealousy, wrath and envy are works of the flesh; and the source and origin of all these evils is pride, which reigns in the devil even though he is without flesh. For who has more hatred for the saints than he? Who is found to be more at variance with them, or more wrathful towards them, or more jealous and envious of them? Yet he has all these faults without having flesh. How, then, can they be the 'works of the flesh' other than because they are the works of man, to whom, as I have said, the apostle applies the term 'flesh'?

It is not, then, by having flesh, which the devil does not have, that man has become like the devil. Rather, it is by living according to his own self; that is, according to man. For the devil chose to live according to self when he did not abide in the truth, so that the lie that he told was his own, and not God's. The devil is not only a liar; he is 'the father of lies':²⁰ he was, indeed, the first to lie, and falsehood, like sin, began with him.

4 What it is to live according to man and according to God

Thus, when a man lives according to man and not according to God, he resembles the devil. For even an angel should have lived not according to self, but according to God, if he was to abide in the truth and utter God's truth rather than his own lie. For, in another place, the apostle also has this to say, concerning man: 'But if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie'.²¹ He says that the lie is ours, but the truth God's.

When a man lives according to truth, then, he lives not according to self, but according to God; for it is God Who has said, 'I am the truth.'²² When he lives according to self, however – that is, according to man, and not according to God – he then certainly lives according to falsehood. This is not because man himself is falsehood; for his Author and Creator is God, who is by no means the

²⁰ John 8,44.

²¹ Rom. 3,7.

²² John 14,6.

Author and Creator of falsehood. Rather, it is because man was created righteous, to live according to His Maker and not according to himself, doing his Maker's will and not his own: falsehood consists in not living in the way for which he was created.

Man does indeed wish to be happy; but he lives in such a way that it is not possible for him to be so. What could be more of a falsehood than this? It is not in vain, then, to say that every sin is a falsehood. For sin is committed only by an act of will; and what we will is either that things should go well with us, or that they should not go ill with us. Hence the falsehood: we commit sin so that things may go well with us, and, instead, they go ill with us. Or we sin so that we may fare better, and, instead, we fare worse. Why is this, if not because wellbeing can only come to a man from the God Whom he forsakes by sinning, and not from himself? – for it is by living according to self that he sins.

I have said already that two cities, different from and inimical to one another, have arisen because some live according to the flesh, and others according to the spirit. It can now also be said that some live according to man, and others according to God. Paul expresses the matter very clearly when he says to the Corinthians, 'For whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not of the flesh, and walk as men?'²³ To 'walk as men', therefore, is the same as to be 'of the flesh', because by 'flesh', which is a part of man, man himself is to be understood.

Indeed, the apostle had earlier called 'animal' the same people who he subsequently says are 'of the flesh'. He speaks as follows:

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God no man knoweth, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the animal man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him.²⁴

It is to such men, then – that is, to 'animal' men – that he says, a little later, 'And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto

²³ 1 Cor. 3,3.

²⁴ 1 Cor. 2,11 ff.

spiritual, but as unto fleshly, men.'²⁵ Both these terms, 'animal' and 'fleshly', are instances of the figure of speech where the whole is signified by a part. For the soul [*anima*] and flesh are parts of a man, and can signify the whole man. Thus, the 'animal' man is not something different from the 'fleshly' man. Rather, they are one and the same: that is, man living according to man. In the same way, the allusion is simply to men when we read, 'By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified';²⁶ or in what is written: 'All the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt with him, were threescore and ten.'²⁷ We are to understand that, in the first passage, 'no flesh' means 'no man', and, in the second, the threescore and ten souls were threescore and ten men.

Again, where the apostle says, 'Not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth', he might have said, 'Not in the words which the wisdom of the flesh teacheth.' By the same token, when he says, 'You walk as men', he might have said, 'You walk according to the flesh.' This appears more clearly in what he then adds: 'For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not but men?'²⁸ Here, where he says, 'Are ye not but men?' he makes his meaning plainer than when he said, 'You are animal' and 'You are fleshly': that is, You live according to man, not according to God; for if you lived according to Him, you would yourselves be gods.

5 That the Platonic view of body and soul is more tolerable than that of the Manichaeans, but is itself to be condemned because it ascribes all vices to the nature of flesh

There is no need, then, in the matter of our sins and vices, to do injustice to our Creator by accusing the nature of flesh, which, of its own kind and in its due place, is good. But it is not good for anyone to forsake the good Creator and to live according to a created good: whether according to the flesh, or the soul, or the whole man

²⁵ 1 Cor. 3,1.

²⁶ Rom. 3,20.

²⁷ Gen. 46,27.

²⁸ 1 Cor. 3,4.

who, because he consists of both soul and flesh, can be signified by either 'soul' alone or 'flesh' alone. For anyone who praises the nature of the soul as the highest good, and accuses the nature of flesh as something evil, is himself fleshly both in his devotion to the soul and in his rejection of the flesh; for his belief is a matter of human vanity, not of divine truth.

The Platonists are not, indeed, so foolish as the Manichaeans; for they do not detest earthly bodies as the natural substance of evil.²⁹ On the contrary, they attribute all the elements of which this visible and tangible world is composed, and their properties, to God the Creator. Nonetheless, they hold that souls are so influenced by earthly limbs and dying members that they derive from them their unwholesome desires and fears and joys and sorrows. And these four 'disturbances' (as Cicero calls them)³⁰ or 'passions' (which is the usual term, rendered exactly from the Greek), embrace all the vices of human conduct.³¹

If this is true, however, how is it that, in Virgil, when Aeneas learns from his father in the underworld that souls will return again to bodies, he marvels at this belief, exclaiming: 'O father, can we believe that souls rise up to heaven and then return once more to encumbering bodies? What dire lust for life thus holds them in such misery?'³² Does this 'dire lust', deriving from earthly limbs and dying members, still dwell even in those souls whose purity is so much vaunted? Does not Virgil say that such souls have been cleansed of all 'bodily plagues', as he calls them? Do they begin, then, even after this, to 'desire a return to bodies'?³³

Hence, even if it were true (although the belief is an entirely vain one) that departing and returning souls pass through an incessant alternation of purification and defilement, we should still conclude that it cannot be truthfully said that all the culpable and vicious motions of such souls arise simply from their earthly bodies. For, according to the Platonists themselves, this 'dire lust', as their distinguished spokesman calls it, is so far from deriving from the body that, of itself, it compels the soul to return to the body even after

²⁹ Cf. Augustine, *De haer.*, 46.

³⁰ *Tusc. disp.*, 4,6,11.

³¹ Cf. Bk viii,17.

³² *Aen.*, 6,719ff.

³³ *Aen.*, 6,751.

the soul has been cleansed of every bodily plague and established outside any kind of body. Thus, as they themselves confess, it is not only under the influence of the flesh that the soul experiences desire, fear, joy and sorrow; it can also be disturbed by such emotions arising from within itself.

6 Of the quality of the human will, the judgment of which decides whether the dispositions of the mind are wrong or right

What is important here is the quality of a man's will. For if the will is perverse, the emotions will be perverse; but if it is righteous, the emotions will be not only blameless, but praiseworthy. The will is engaged in all of them; indeed, they are all no more than acts of the will. For what is desire and joy but an act of will in agreement with what we wish for? And what is fear and grief but an act of will in disagreement with what we do not wish for? When this agreement manifests itself as the pursuit of what we wish for, it is called desire; and when it manifests itself as enjoyment of what we wish for, it is joy. By the same token, when we disagree with something that we do not wish to happen, such an act of will is fear; but when we disagree with something which happens against our will, that act of will is grief. And, universally, as a man's will is attracted or repelled by the variety of things which are pursued or avoided, so it changes and turns into emotions of one kind or the other.

Therefore, the man who lives according to God and not according to man must be a lover of the good; and it follows from this that he must hate what is evil. Further, since no one is evil by nature, but whoever is evil is evil because of some fault, he who lives according to God has a duty of 'perfect hatred' towards those who are evil.³⁴ That is, he should not hate the man because of the fault, nor should he love the fault because of the man; rather, he should hate the fault but love the man. And when the fault has been healed there will remain only what he ought to love, and nothing that he ought to hate

³⁴ Psalm. 139,22.

7 We find that the words *amor* and *dilectio* are used indiscriminately in Holy Scripture, with reference to both good and evil

When a man's purpose is to love God not according to man, but according to God, and to love his neighbour as himself, he is beyond doubt said to be of good will because of this love. This disposition is more usually called 'charity' [*caritas*] in Holy Scripture; but, in the same sacred writings, it is also called love [*amor*]. For example, the apostle teaches us that the man chosen to govern the people of God should be a lover [*amator*] of the good.³⁵ And when the Lord Himself had asked the apostle Peter, 'Lovest thou me [*diligis me*] more than these?', Peter answered, 'Lord, Thou knowest that I love [*amo*] Thee.'³⁶ Then the Lord asked again, not whether Peter loved [*amaret*] Him, but whether he loved [*diligeret*] Him; and Peter again answered, 'Lord, Thou knowest that I love [*amo*] Thee.' But when Jesus asked a third time, He Himself did not say, 'Lovest thou me [*diligis me*]?' but 'Lovest thou me [*amas me*]?' And the evangelist here goes on, 'Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, *Amas me*?' It was not 'the third time', however; for the Lord said, *Amas me*? only once, whereas He had said *Diligis me*? twice. From this, we understand that when the Lord said, *Diligis me*? He meant nothing different from when He said, *Amas me*? Peter, however, did not change the word used for this one thing, but replied the third time, 'Lord, Thou knowest that I love [*amo*] Thee.'

I have thought this distinction worthy of mention because not a few have supposed that *dilectio* and *caritas* are something different from *amor*. For they say that *dilectio* is to be taken in a good sense and *amor* in a bad. It is quite certain, however, that this was not the usage even of authors of secular literature. But let the philosophers decide for themselves whether or not to make this distinction for their own purposes. Their books indicate sufficiently, at any rate, that they hold *amor* in high esteem when it is concerned with good things which are directed towards God Himself. But my own concern is to show that the Scriptures of our religion, whose authority we place above all other writings, do not distinguish between

³⁵ Titus 1,8.

³⁶ John 21,15ff.

amor and *dilectio* or *caritas*. For we have seen that *amor* is also used in a good sense.

But if anyone supposes that, whereas *amor* can be used in both a bad sense and a good, *dilectio* can have only a good meaning, let him attend to what is written in the psalm, 'The man that loveth [*diligit*] violence hateth his own soul',³⁷ and also by the apostle John, 'If any man love [*dilexerit*] the world, the love [*dilectio*] of the Father is not in him.'³⁸ Note that in the latter text *dilectio* is used in both a good sense and a bad. I have already shown the use of *amor* in a good sense; but if anyone should require an example of its use in a bad sense, let him read what is written: 'For men shall be lovers [*amantes*] of their own selves, and lovers [*amatores*] of money.'³⁹

A righteous will, then, is a good love; and a perverted will is an evil love. Therefore, love striving to possess what it loves is desire; love possessing and enjoying what it loves is joy; love fleeing what is adverse to it is fear; and love undergoing such adversity when it occurs is grief. Accordingly, these feelings are bad if the love is bad, and good if it is good.

Let us now prove the truth of what we have said from the Scriptures. The apostle has 'a desire [*concupiscit*] to depart, and to be with Christ'.⁴⁰ Also, 'My soul hath desired [*concupivit*] to long for Thy judgments',⁴¹ or, to put it more appropriately, 'My soul hath longed to desire [*concupiscere*] Thy judgments.' Again, 'The desire [*concupiscentia*] for wisdom bringeth to a kingdom.'⁴² It is, however, an established usage that, when we employ the words *cupiditas* or *concupiscentia* without adding what it is that is desired, they signify 'desire' in a bad sense. 'Joy' has a good sense, as in, 'Have joy in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous',⁴³ and 'Thou hast put joy in my heart';⁴⁴ and 'Thou wilt fill me with joy by Thy countenance.'⁴⁵ 'Fear' has a good sense in the place where the apostle says, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling',⁴⁶ and 'Be not high-

³⁷ Psalm 11,5.

³⁸ John 2,15.

³⁹ 2 Tim. 3,2.

⁴⁰ Phil. 1,23.

⁴¹ Psalm 119,20.

⁴² Wisd. 6,20.

⁴³ Psalm 32,11.

⁴⁴ Psalm 4,7.

⁴⁵ Psalm 16,11.

⁴⁶ Phil. 2,12.

mind, but fear',⁴⁷ and 'But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.'⁴⁸ As for 'grief', it is a delicate question whether any example can be found of this word used in a good sense. Cicero chooses instead to use 'distress' [*aegritudo*],⁴⁹ whereas Virgil uses 'pain' [*dolor*], as when he says, 'They feel pain and gladness.'⁵⁰ I, however, prefer to say 'grief' because 'distress' and 'pain' are more commonly used to denote corporeal states.

8 Of the three dispositions which the Stoics wish to find in the mind of the wise man, pain or grief being excluded because the virtuous mind ought not to feel it

In place of three of the disturbances of the mind discussed above, the Stoics wish to find in the mind of the wise man three dispositions, called *eupatheiai* in Greek, and in Latin, by Cicero, *constantiae*.⁵¹ Instead of desire they find will; instead of joy, gladness; instead of fear, caution. They deny, however, that there can exist in the wise man's mind anything corresponding to distress or pain, which, to avoid ambiguity, I have preferred to call grief.

The will, say the Stoics, certainly pursues the good, and this is what the wise man does; gladness arises from the attainment of the good, which the wise man attains wherever he may be; and caution avoids evil, which is what the wise man ought to avoid. Grief, however, is occasioned by an evil which has already happened; and since, as they think, no evil can befall a wise man, they say that there can be nothing corresponding to grief in the wise man's mind. What they say, then, amounts to this: that only the wise man can have will, gladness and caution, whereas the fool can experience nothing save desire, joy, fear and grief. The three former are *constantiae*, while the latter four are 'disturbances' according to Cicero, but 'passions' according to most other authors. In Greek, however,

⁴⁷ Rom. 11,20.

⁴⁸ 2 Cor. 11,3.

⁴⁹ *Tusc. disp.*, 3,10.

⁵⁰ *Aen.*, 6,733.

⁵¹ *Tusc. disp.*, 4,6,11ff; Diogenes Laertius, 7,116.

as I have said, the three former are called *eupathetai*; and the four latter are called *pathé*.

When I was examining, as diligently as I could, the question of whether this terminology is in keeping with Holy Scripture, I found that the prophet speaks as follows: 'There is no gladness, saith my God, to the wicked.'⁵² This implies that the wicked can feel joy but not gladness, because gladness belongs only to good and pious men. Again, the Gospel says, 'All things whatsoever ye will that men should do to you, do ye even so to them';⁵³ and this seems to imply that no one can will, but can only desire, something evilly or wickedly. It is, indeed, because of this custom of speech that not a few translators have added the word 'good', and so have translated the text as, 'All good things whatsoever ye will that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.' This was because they deemed it necessary to beware lest anyone should wish to have dishonourable things done for him by others: the provision of luxurious feasts, for example, to say nothing of baser things. Such a person might suppose himself to be fulfilling the commandment if he did the same for others. But in the Greek Gospel, of which the Latin is a translation, the word 'good' does not appear. Rather, it reads: 'All things whatsoever ye will that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.' The reason for this, I believe, is that we are intended to understand the word 'good' to be implicit in 'ye will'; for the text does not say, 'ye desire'.

We are not, however, required always to bridle our speech with such subtleties of meaning: rather, they are to be used as occasion requires. And when we read those writers whose authority we cannot reject without impiety, these subtleties of meaning are to be understood in places where the true meaning of the text cannot otherwise find expression: as in the examples which I have quoted, partly from the prophet and partly from the Gospel. For who does not know that the ungodly exult with joy? – yet 'There is no gladness, saith my God, to the wicked.' How can this be, then, if not because 'gladness' is here used in a precise and distinct sense, and has a special meaning? Again, who will deny that it is not right to teach men to do to others what they 'desire' to have done to them-

⁵² Is. 57,21 (LXX).

⁵³ Matt. 7,12.

selves by others, lest they then gratify one another with disgraceful and illicit pleasures? Yet the most wholesome and true precept of all is: 'All things whatsoever ye will that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.' And why is this, if not because, in this place, the word 'will' is used in a certain precise fashion which cannot bear a bad sense? On the other hand, if there were no such thing as an evil will, there would not be the more familiar usage which is very frequently employed in ordinary speech, as in, 'Let it not be thy will to make any manner of lie.'⁵⁴ But a distinction is to be made between the depravity of an evil will and the will of which the angels spoke when they proclaimed 'On earth peace, good will toward men.'⁵⁵ The addition of the word 'good' here is redundant if will can only be good. Again, when the apostle says that 'charity feels no gladness in iniquity,'⁵⁶ how would this be any great praise of charity if it were not for the fact that malignity does feel gladness in iniquity?

Such an indiscriminate use of these terms is seen also among authors of secular literature. For Cicero, a most distinguished orator, says, 'I desire, conscript fathers, to be merciful.'⁵⁷ He here uses the word 'desire' in a good sense; and who would be so perversely exact as to contend that he ought to have said, 'my will is', and not 'I desire'? On the other hand, in Terence's play, there is the disgraceful young man who, mad with the heat of his own lust, says, 'I have a will for naught but Philumena.'⁵⁸ But his 'will' was his desire; and this is indicated quite clearly by the answer then given by his slave, more sensible than he. The slave says to his master, 'How much better it would be for you if, instead of idly talking, and thus vainly inflaming your desire all the more, you made it your task to rid your mind of this love.' Then again, 'gladness' is used in a bad sense in that same line of Virgil which contains his most brief statement of the four things which disturb the mind: 'Hence come desire and fear, gladness and sorrow.'⁵⁹ The same author also speaks of 'The evil gladness of the mind.'⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Ecclus. 7,13.

⁵⁵ Luke 2,14.

⁵⁶ 1 Cor. 13,6.

⁵⁷ *In Catil.*, 1,2,4.

⁵⁸ *Andria*, 306ff.

⁵⁹ *Aen.*, 6,733.

⁶⁰ *Aen.*, 6,278f.

Will, caution and gladness, then, are common to both good and evil men; and – to make the same point in different words – good and evil men alike feel desire, fear and joy. But the good feel these emotions in a good way, and the bad feel them in a bad way, just as the will of men may be righteous or perverse. Also, although the Stoics find nothing in the mind of the wise man corresponding to grief, we discover that even this is used in a good sense, and especially in our own Scriptures. The apostle, for example, praises the Corinthians for having felt grief ‘after a godly manner’. But perhaps someone will say that the apostle congratulates them on feeling grief in repentance: a kind of grief, that is, which can belong only to those who have sinned. For this is what he says:

I perceive that the same epistle hath grieved you, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoyce, not that ye were grieved, but that ye grieved to repentance: for ye were grieved after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly grief worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the grief of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye grieved after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you!⁶¹

With reference to this, then, the Stoics can reply, in defence of their own position, that, whereas grief does seem to serve a useful purpose when it gives rise to repentance of sin, it still cannot exist in the mind of a wise man, because he is subject neither to sin, for which he might repent and be grieved, nor to any other evil which it might grieve him to undergo or endure. They tell of one whose name, if memory does not fail me, was Alcibiades. He seemed to himself to be happy; but when Socrates demonstrated to him by argument how miserable he was because he was foolish, he wept.⁶² For him, then, foolishness was the cause of a useful and desirable grief: the grief of one who deplores that he is not what he ought to be. But the wise man, the Stoics say, cannot experience such grief.

9 Of the things which disturb the mind, which become right feelings in the lives of righteous men

But as to this question of the things which disturb the mind, I have already replied to the philosophers in the ninth book of this work,

⁶¹ 1 Cor. 7,8ff.

⁶² Cicero, *Tusc. disp.*, 3,32,77.

showing that they care more for words than for substance, and that they desire controversy more than truth.⁶³ We Christians, on the other hand, are citizens of the Holy City of God, living according to God during the pilgrimage of this present life. Such citizens feel fear and desire, pain and gladness, but in a manner consistent with the Holy Scriptures and wholesome doctrine; and because their love is righteous, all these emotions are righteous in them.

They fear eternal pain and desire eternal life. They feel pain at the present time, because they are still groaning within themselves, 'waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies'.⁶⁴ They rejoice in the hope that there 'shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory'.⁶⁵ Again, they fear to sin, and they desire to persevere. They feel pain for their sins, and gladness in their good works. That they may fear to sin, they are told, 'Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.'⁶⁶ That they may desire to persevere, the Scripture tells them, 'He that persevereth to the end shall be saved.'⁶⁷ That they may feel pain for their sins, they are told, 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.'⁶⁸ That they may feel gladness in good works, they are told, 'God loveth a cheerful giver.'⁶⁹

Again, according to their infirmity or resolution, they fear or desire to be tempted, and they feel pain or gladness when temptations arise. That they may fear temptations, they are told, 'If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.'⁷⁰ That they may desire temptations, they hear a valiant man of the City of God saying, 'Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.'⁷¹ That they may feel pain in temptations, they see Peter weeping.⁷² That they may feel gladness in

⁶³ Bk ix,4f.

⁶⁴ Rom. 8,23.

⁶⁵ 1 Cor. 15,54.

⁶⁶ Matt. 24,12.

⁶⁷ Matt. 10,22.

⁶⁸ 1 John 1,8.

⁶⁹ 2 Cor. 9,8.

⁷⁰ Gal. 6,1.

⁷¹ Psalm 26,2.

⁷² Matt. 26,75.

temptations, they hear James saying, 'My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.'⁷³

But it is not only for their own sakes that the citizens of the City of God are moved by these feelings. They also feel them on behalf of those whom they desire to see redeemed and fear to see perish. They feel pain if these do perish, and gladness if they are redeemed. We who have come into the Church of Christ from the world of the Gentiles should be especially mindful of that man of supreme virtue and valour who was the 'teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity';⁷⁴ a man who gloried in his own infirmities, who laboured more abundantly than all his fellow apostles, and who in his many epistles instructed not only those of the people of God who were seen by him at the time, but also those who were foreseen as yet to be. He was Christ's athlete, taught by Him, anointed by Him, and crucified with Him.⁷⁵ He gloried in Christ, and He was 'made a spectacle to angels and to men'⁷⁶ in the theatre of this world, where he fought a great fight lawfully,⁷⁷ and 'pressed towards the mark for the prize of the high calling'.⁷⁸ The citizens of the City of God are delighted to behold him with the eyes of faith. They behold him rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep, troubled by fighting without and fears within, desiring to depart and be with Christ.⁷⁹ They behold him longing to see the Romans so that he might have some fruit among them also, even as among other Gentiles.⁸⁰ They behold him jealous for the Corinthians, and in that jealousy fearing that their minds should be corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ.⁸¹ They behold him suffering great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart for the Israelites, because, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and wishing to establish their own, they did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God.⁸² They behold him as he declares not only

⁷³ James 1,2.

⁷⁴ 1 Tim. 2,7.

⁷⁵ Cf. Gal. 1,12; 2,20; 2 Cor. 1,21.

⁷⁶ 1 Cor. 4,9.

⁷⁷ Cf. 2 Tim. 2,5.

⁷⁸ Phil. 3,14.

⁷⁹ Cf. Rom. 12,15; 2 Cor. 7,5; Phil. 1,23.

⁸⁰ Cf. Rom. 1,11ff.

⁸¹ Cf. 2 Cor. 11,2f.

⁸² Cf. Rom. 9,2; 10,3.

his pain, but also his mourning for certain persons who had sinned already, and not repented of the uncleanness and fornication which they had committed.⁸³

If these emotions and affections, which come from love of the good and from holy charity, are to be called vices, then let us allow that real vices should be called virtues. But since, when they are exhibited in the proper circumstances, these affections are the consequences of right reason, who would then dare to say that they are unwholesome or vicious passions? Hence, when the Lord Himself deigned to live a human life in the form of a servant,⁸⁴ though having no sin, He displayed these emotions in circumstances where He judged that they ought to be displayed. For human emotion was not feigned in Him Who truly had the body of a man and the mind of a man. And so what the Gospel says is certainly not untrue when it reports that He was grieved and angry at the Jews' hardness of heart;⁸⁵ that He said, 'I am glad for your sakes, to the intent ye may believe';⁸⁶ that He even wept when He was about to raise Lazarus;⁸⁷ that He desired to eat the Passover with His disciples,⁸⁸ and that, as His passion drew nigh, His soul was grieved.⁸⁹ Truly, He accepted these emotions into His human mind for the sake of His own assured purpose, and when He so willed, just as He was made man when He so willed.

We must, however, confess that the emotions which we have, even when they are righteous and according to God, belong to this life, and not to the life to come for which we hope; and that we often yield to them even against our will. Thus, even though moved by praiseworthy charity and not by any culpable desire, we sometimes weep even when we do not wish to do so. These tears come, then, from the infirmity of our human condition; but this was not true of the Lord Jesus, Whose very weakness came from His power. Yet if we felt no such emotions at all while subject to the infirmity of this life, we should then certainly not be living righteously. For the apostle condemned and denounced certain persons who, he said,

⁸³ 2 Cor. 12,21.

⁸⁴ Phil. 2,7.

⁸⁵ Mark 3,5.

⁸⁶ John 11,15.

⁸⁷ John 11,35.

⁸⁸ Luke 22,15.

⁸⁹ Matt. 26,38

were 'without natural affection'.⁹⁰ The holy psalm also blames those of whom it says, 'I looked for some to take pity, but there was none.'⁹¹ Indeed, if, while in this place of misery, we were to be entirely free from pain, this, as one of this world's scholars has understood and said, 'would not be attained without a great price: savagery of mind, and stupor of body'.⁹²

At this point, let us consider what the Greeks call *apatheia*, which might possibly be rendered in Latin by *impassibilitas*: a word which refers to a condition of the mind rather than the body.⁹³ If, then, we are to understand this 'impassibility' to mean a life without those emotions which arise contrary to reason and which disturb the mind, it is clearly a good and desirable condition. It does not, however, belong to this present life. For the Scripture speaks not, indeed, of men of any and every sort, but of the most godly and righteous and holy when it says, 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.'⁹⁴ This condition of *apatheia*, then, will come to pass only when there is no sin in man. At the present time, we live well enough if we live without blame. But if anyone supposes that his life is without sin, he does not avoid sin, but rather forfeits pardon.⁹⁵

Moreover, if *apatheia* is to be defined as a condition such that the mind cannot be touched by any emotion whatsoever, who would not judge such insensitivity to be the worst of all vices? It can, therefore, be said without absurdity that our perfect blessedness which is to come will be free from the pangs of fear and from any kind of grief; but who save one wholly estranged from the truth would say that there will be no love and no gladness there? Moreover, if *apatheia* is a condition such that there is no fear to terrify and no pain to torment, then it is a condition to be avoided in this life if we wish to live rightly, that is, according to God. But it is clearly to be hoped that this condition will prevail in that life of blessedness which, it is promised, will be eternal.

Now one kind of fear is that of which the apostle John speaks: 'There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because

⁹⁰ Rom. 1,31.

⁹¹ Psalm 69,20.

⁹² Cicero, *Tusc. disp.*, 3,6,12.

⁹³ Cf. Seneca, *Epist.* 9.

⁹⁴ 1 John 1,8.

⁹⁵ Cf. Augustine, *In evang. Iohann.*, 41,10.

fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.⁹⁶ This, however is not fear of the same kind as that felt by the apostle Paul when he feared lest the Corinthians be beguiled by the subtlety of the serpent.⁹⁷ This latter is the fear which love has, and which, indeed, only love has. But the other kind of fear is one which does not arise from love; and of this kind the apostle Paul says, 'Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear.'⁹⁸ That fear which 'is clean, enduring for ever',⁹⁹ if it will exist in the world to come – and how otherwise can it be understood to endure for ever? – is not a fear that frightens a man away from an evil which may befall him, but a fear which keeps him steadfast in a good which cannot be lost.

For where the love of a good thing attained is immutable, there, surely, the fear of an evil to be avoided is a serene fear, if one can so express it. For the fear that is 'clean' signifies the act of will by which we shall invariably refuse to sin, and by which we shall be vigilant against sin, not with the anxiety of an infirmity which fears to sin, but with the tranquillity of love. Alternatively, if there can be no fear of any kind in that most secure state of perpetual and happy joy, the saying, 'The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever', is of the same kind as, 'The patience of the poor shall not perish for ever.'¹⁰⁰ For patience itself will not be eternal, since it is only necessary where there are evils to be borne: rather, it is the goal attained through patience that will be eternal. So, perhaps, 'clean' fear is said to endure for ever because the goal to which the fear itself leads will endure forever.

We must, then, lead a righteous life if we are to attain a life of blessedness; and such a righteous life will exhibit all these emotions righteously, whereas a perverse life exhibits them perversely. Moreover, a life which is blessed and, by the same token, eternal, will exhibit a love and a gladness which are not only righteous, but also assured, and will contain no fear or pain at all. Hence, it is now clear what kind of life the citizens of the City of God must lead during this pilgrimage: they must live according to the spirit and

⁹⁶ 1 John 4,18.

⁹⁷ 2 Cor. 11,3.

⁹⁸ Rom. 8,15.

⁹⁹ Psalm 19,9.

¹⁰⁰ Psalm 9,18.

not according to the flesh; that is, according to God, and not according to man. And it is also clear what kind of life they will lead in that immortality towards which they are progressing.

On the other hand, the city, that is, the fellowship, of the ungodly consists of those who live not according to God, but according to man: who, in worshipping false gods and despising the true Divinity, follow the teachings of men or of demons. This city is convulsed by those emotions as if by diseases and upheavals. And if it has any citizens who seem to control and in some way temper those emotions, they are so proud and elated in their impiety that, for this very reason, their haughtiness increases even as their pain diminishes. Some of these, with a vanity as monstrous as it is rare, are so entranced by their own self-restraint that they are not stirred or excited or swayed or influenced by any emotions at all. But these rather suffer an entire loss of their humanity than achieve a true tranquillity. For a thing is not right merely because it is harsh, nor is stolidity the same thing as health.

10 Whether we are to believe that the first human beings were subject to emotions of any kind when they were placed in Paradise and before they sinned

But what of the first man – or, rather, of the first human beings, since there was a union of two persons? It is not improper to ask whether, before they sinned, these felt in their animal bodies the kind of emotions which we shall not feel in our spiritual bodies when all sin has been purged and ended. For if they did, how could they have been blessed in that memorable place of blessedness: that is, in Paradise? For who can be called blessed if he is afflicted by fear and pain? Moreover, what was there to bring fear or pain to those human beings where there was such an abundance of good things, where there was no danger of death or any bodily sickness, and where nothing was absent that a good will might seek, nor anything present that might injure man in flesh or mind as he lived his life of felicity?

The love of the pair for God and for one another was undisturbed, and they lived in a faithful and sincere fellowship which brought great gladness to them, for what they loved was always at hand for their enjoyment. There was a tranquil avoidance of sin;

and, as long as this continued, no evil of any kind intruded, from any source, to bring them sadness. Could it be, however, that they desired to reach out to the forbidden tree and eat of it, but were afraid to die? If so, those human beings were already troubled by both desire and fear, even in that place. But God forbid that we should suppose this to have been so where there was no sin of any kind. For to desire what the law of God prohibits, and to abstain from it merely from fear of punishment and not from love of righteousness, certainly is a sin. God forbid, I say, that, before all sin, there already existed that sin, committed in respect of a tree, of which, when committed in respect of a woman, the Lord said, 'Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.'¹⁰¹

How happy, then, were the first human beings, neither troubled by any disturbance of the mind nor pained by any disorder of the body! And the whole universal fellowship of mankind would have been just as happy had our first parents not committed that evil deed whose effect was to be transmitted to their posterity, and if none of their stock had sown in wickedness what they must reap in damnation. Moreover, this felicity would have remained until, through the blessing given in the words, 'Be fruitful, and multiply',¹⁰² the number of the predestined saints was made up; and there would then have been granted that other and greater felicity which has been given to the most blessed angels. In this state of blessedness, there would have been the certain assurance that no one would sin and no one would die; and the life of the saints, without any previous experience of labour, pain or death, would have been already what it is now to become after all these experiences, when our bodies are restored to incorruption at the resurrection of the dead.

11 Of the fall of the first man, whose nature, created good and vitiated by sin, can be restored only by its Creator

But because God foreknew everything, He therefore could not have been unaware that man would sin. For this reason, all our assertions

¹⁰¹ Matt. 5,28.

¹⁰² Gen. 1,28.

about the Holy City must take account of God's foreknowledge and dispensation: they must not presuppose things which could not have come to our knowledge because they had no place in God's dispensation. Man could not disturb the divine purpose by his sin: could not, that is, compel God to change what He had decreed. For, by His foreknowledge, God foresaw both how evil the man would become whom He Himself had created good, and also what good He would nonetheless bring forth from that evil.

God is, indeed, said to change His decrees; and we even read in the Scriptures that, figuratively speaking, God 'repented'.¹⁰³ But such statements reflect a merely human perspective, or refer to something which has in fact happened according to the order of natural causes; they do not detract from the Almighty's foreknowledge of what He will do. Thus, as it is written, 'God hath made man upright',¹⁰⁴ and therefore of good will; for man would not have been upright had he not had a good will. A good will, then, is the work of God, since man was created with it by God.

On the other hand, the first evil act of the will, since it preceded all other evil acts in man, consisted rather in its falling away from the work of God to its own works than in any one work. And those works of the will were evil because they were according to itself, and not according to God. Thus, the will itself, or man himself, insofar as his will was evil, was, as it were, the corrupt tree which brought forth the evil fruit of those evil deeds.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, though an evil will is not according to nature, but contrary to nature because it is a defect, it nonetheless belongs to the nature of which it is a defect, for it cannot exist except in a nature. But it can only exist in a nature which the Creator created out of nothing, not in that which He begot out of Himself, as He begot the Word through Whom all things were made.¹⁰⁶ For, although God formed man of the dust of the earth, the earth itself and all earthly matter were derived from nothing at all; and when man was made, God gave to his body a soul which was made out of nothing.

¹⁰³ Cf. Gen. 6,6; Exod. 32,14; 1 Sam. 15,11; 35; 2 Sam. 24,16; cf. Augustine, *De doct. Christ.*, 3,40.

¹⁰⁴ Eccles. 7,29.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Matt. 7,17f.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. John 1,3.

Good things prevail over bad, however: so much so that, although evil things are permitted to exist in order to demonstrate how the justice and perfect foresight of the Creator can make good use even of them, good things can nonetheless exist without the evil, just as the true and supreme God, and all heavenly creatures, invisible and visible, exist above this murky air of ours. Evil things, however, cannot exist without the good; for the natures in which evil exists are certainly good, insofar as they are natures. Moreover, an evil is eradicated not by the removal of the nature in which it has arisen, or of any part of it, but by the healing and correction of the nature which has become vitiated and depraved.

The choice of the will, then, is truly free only when it is not the slave of vices and sins. God gave to the will such freedom, and, now that it has been lost through its own fault, it cannot be restored save by Him Who could bestow it. Hence, the Truth says, 'If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.'¹⁰⁷ This is the same as saying, 'If the Son therefore shall redeem you, ye shall be redeemed indeed'; for He is our Redeemer for the same reason that He is our Saviour.

The first man, then, lived according to God in a Paradise both corporeal and spiritual.¹⁰⁸ It was not simply a corporeal Paradise, furnishing the body with good things while failing to be spiritual because not supplying the good things of the soul. Neither, however, was it simply a spiritual Paradise which man could enjoy through his inward senses, without being a corporeal one to be enjoyed by his outward senses. It was plainly both, to satisfy both. But then came that proud angel, envious by reason of that same pride which had induced him to turn away from God and follow himself. With an ambition like that of a tyrant, he wished rather to gloat over subjects of his own than to be a subject himself; and so he fell from the spiritual Paradise. Of his fall, and that of his accomplices, who, having been angels of God, now became his angels, I have said as much as I could in the eleventh and twelfth books of this work.¹⁰⁹ After this fall, he sought to insinuate himself, by crafty suggestion, into the heart of man, whose unfallen state he

¹⁰⁷ John 8,36.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Augustine, *De gen. ad lit.*, 8,1.

¹⁰⁹ Bk XI,13; XII,1.

envied now that he himself had fallen. To this end, he chose to speak through a serpent in the corporeal Paradise where the other earthly animals dwelt, tame and harmless, with the two human beings, the male and the female; and this creature, slippery and moving in twisting coils, was indeed well suited to such work. By virtue of his angelic stature and his superior nature, Satan made the serpent subject to him in spiritual wickedness, and, by abusing it as his instrument, had deceitful converse with the woman. No doubt he began with the weaker of the human couple in order to achieve the whole of his purpose by degrees, supposing that the man would not be so easily deluded, or could not be trapped by his own error, but would succumb to the error of another.

This is what happened to Aaron when the people went astray: he did not consent to the making of an idol because he was persuaded by them; rather, he yielded to compulsion.¹¹⁰ Again, it is not believable that Solomon mistakenly supposed that he should serve idols; rather, it was by feminine wiles that he was compelled to commit such a sacrilege.¹¹¹ And so it was with the first man and his wife. They were alone together, two human beings, man and wife. We cannot believe that the man was seduced into transgressing the law of God because he supposed that the woman spoke the truth; rather, he complied with her wishes because of the closeness of the bond between them. Thus, it was not without reason that the apostle said, 'And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived.'¹¹² For she accepted the serpent's statement as true, while Adam did not wish to be separated from his only companion, even at the cost of sharing in her sin. He was not less guilty than she, however, if he sinned knowingly and deliberately. Hence, the apostle does not say, 'Adam did not sin', but 'Adam was not deceived.' For he surely refers to Adam when he says, 'By one man sin entered into the world';¹¹³ and, later and more clearly, he speaks of 'the similitude of Adam's transgression'.¹¹⁴

By the word 'deceived', the apostle wishes us to understand those who do not think that what they do is sin. But Adam knew; for

¹¹⁰ Exod. 32,3ff.

¹¹¹ 1 Kings 11,4.

¹¹² 1 Tim. 2,14.

¹¹³ Rom. 5,12.

¹¹⁴ Rom. 5,14.

how, otherwise, would it be true that 'Adam was not deceived'? He was, however, unacquainted with the divine severity; and so he could have been mistaken in supposing that he had committed only a venial sin. Thus, while he was not deceived in the same way that the woman was deceived, he nonetheless erred as to the judgment that he would incur when he said, 'The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.'¹¹⁵ What more, therefore, need be said? They were not both deceived by their credulity; but both were captured by sin and entangled in the snares of the devil.

12 Of the nature of the sin committed by the first human beings

Someone may be moved to ask why other sins do not change human nature in the way that it was changed by the transgression of the first two human beings. For, because of that sin, human nature was made subject to all the great corruption that we see and feel, and so to death also. What is more, man came to be distracted by turbulent and conflicting emotions, and so became very different from what he had been when he dwelt in Paradise before his sin; though, even then, he lived in an animal body.

Anyone who, as I have said, is moved to ask this question should not regard what was done by Adam and Eve as light and trivial. Certainly, it involved a piece of food which was not evil or hurtful other than because it was forbidden; for God would not have created or planted anything evil in a place of such great felicity. But God's command required obedience, and this virtue is, in a certain sense, the mother and guardian of all other virtues in a rational creature. For man has been so made that it is to his advantage to be subject to God, and harmful to him to act according to his own will rather than that of his Creator. Also, where there was so great an abundance of other foods, the command prohibiting the eating of one kind of food was as easy to observe as it was simple to remember, and it was given at a time when desire was not in opposition to the will: such opposition arose later, as a punishment of the transgression. Therefore, the unrighteousness of disobeying the

¹¹⁵ Gen. 3,12.

command was all the greater in proportion to the ease with which it could have been observed and upheld.¹¹⁶

13 That in Adam's transgression the evil act was preceded by an evil will

It was in secret that Adam and Eve began to be evil; and it was because of this that they were then able to fall into overt disobedience. For they would not have arrived at the evil act had an evil will not preceded it. Moreover, what but pride can have been the beginning of their evil will? – for 'pride is the beginning of sin'.¹¹⁷ And what is pride but an appetite for a perverse kind of elevation? For it is a perverse kind of elevation indeed to forsake the foundation upon which the mind should rest, and to become and remain, as it were, one's own foundation. This occurs when a man is too well pleased with himself; and he is too well pleased with himself when he falls away from that immutable good with which he ought rather to have been pleased than with himself. This betrayal occurs as an act of free will. For if the will had remained unshaken in its love of that higher and immutable Good by Which is bestowed upon it the light by which it can see and the fire by which it can love, it would not have turned aside from this Good to follow its own pleasure. Consequently, the will would not then have been so darkened and chilled as to allow the woman to believe that the serpent had spoken truly, and the man both to place his wife's wish above God's command, and to think it a venial transgression to refuse to forsake his life's companion even though he thereby became her companion in sin.

Thus, the evil act, – that is, the transgression of eating the forbidden fruit – was done only by human beings who were already evil: such an evil fruit could have come only from a corrupted tree.¹¹⁸ Moreover, the corruption of that tree came about contrary to nature, because it certainly could not have happened without a defect in the will, and such a defect is against nature. But only a nature created out of nothing could have been perverted by a defect.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Augustine, *De corr. et grat.*, 31.

¹¹⁷ Eccclus. 10,13; cf. Bk XII,6.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Matt. 7,18.

Thus, though the existence of the will as a nature is due to its creation by God, its falling away from its nature is due to its creation out of nothing.

To be sure, man did not fall away from his nature so completely as to lose all being. When he turned towards himself, however, his being became less complete than when he clung to Him Who exists supremely. Thus, to forsake God and to exist in oneself – that is, to be pleased with oneself – is not immediately to lose all being; but it is to come closer to nothingness. This is why, according to Holy Scripture, the proud are called by another name: they are called ‘selfwilled’.¹¹⁹ For it is good to lift up your hearts; not to self, however, which is pride, but to the Lord. This is obedience, which can belong only to the humble.

In a remarkable way, therefore, there is in humility something which exalts the mind, and something in exaltation which abases it. It may indeed seem paradoxical to say that exaltation abases and humility exalts. Godly humility, however, makes the mind subject to what is superior to it. But nothing is superior to God; and that is why humility exalts the mind by making it subject to God. Exaltation, on the other hand, is a vice; and for that very reason it spurns subjection, and so falls away from Him Who has no superior. Thus, it is cast down, and brings to pass what is written: ‘Thou castedst them down while they were being exalted.’¹²⁰ It does not say, ‘When they had been exalted’, as if they were first exalted and then cast down. Rather, they were cast down even while they were being exalted: their very exaltation was itself a kind of abasement.

This is why humility is most highly praised in the City of God and commended to the City of God during its pilgrimage in this world; and it is especially exemplified in that City’s King, Who is Christ. We are also taught by the Holy Scriptures that the vice of exaltation, the opposite of this virtue, holds complete sway over Christ’s adversary, the devil. Certainly, this is the great difference that distinguishes the two cities of which we are speaking. The one is a fellowship of godly men, and the other of the ungodly; and each has its own angels belonging to it. In the one city, love of God has been given pride of place, and, in the other, love of self.

¹¹⁹ 2 Pet. 2,10.

¹²⁰ Psalm 73,118.

It is clear, therefore, that the devil would not have been able to lure man into the manifest and open sin of doing what God had prohibited had not man already begun to be pleased with himself. That is why Adam was delighted when it was said, 'Ye shall be as gods.'¹²¹ But Adam and Eve would have been better fitted to resemble gods if they had clung in obedience to the highest and true ground of their being, and not, in their pride, made themselves their own ground. For created gods are gods not in their own true nature, but by participation in the true God. By striving after more, man is diminished; when he takes delight in his own self-sufficiency, he falls away from the One who truly suffices him.

The first evil came, then, when man began to be pleased with himself, as if he were his own light; for he then turned away from that Light which, if only he had been pleased with It instead, would have made the man himself a light. This evil, I say, came first, in secret, and there then followed the other evil, which was committed openly. For what is written is true: 'Before a fall the heart of a man is haughty, and before honour is humility.'¹²² The fall that happens in secret precedes the fall that occurs in full view, though the former fall is not recognised as such. For who thinks of exaltation as a fall, even though the falling away was already there, in the guilty desertion of the Most High? On the other hand, who could fail to see that there is a fall when there is an evident and indubitable transgression of a commandment?

This was the reason why God forbade an act which, after it had been committed, could not be defended by any imagined justification. And I venture to say that it is of benefit to the proud that they should fall into some open and manifest sin, which can cause them to be displeased with themselves even after they have already fallen through being pleased with themselves. Peter's condition was more wholesome when he wept than when he was pleased with himself and presumptuous.¹²³ The holy psalm also says this: 'Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek Thy name, O Lord'¹²⁴ — that is, let those who were pleased with themselves when they sought their own name be pleased with Thee as they seek Thine.

¹²¹ Gen. 3,5.

¹²² Prov. 18,12.

¹²³ Cf. *De corr. et grat.*, 24.

¹²⁴ Psalm 83,16

14 Of the pride of the transgressor, which was worse than the transgression itself

But even worse and more damnable is the pride which seeks refuge in an excuse even when the sins are plain to see, as with the first human beings, when the woman said, 'The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat', and the man said, 'The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.' Nowhere here is there heard any petition for pardon, and nowhere any plea for healing. For though they did not deny what they had done, as Cain did,¹²⁵ their pride nonetheless sought to blame their wrongful act upon another: the woman's pride blames the serpent, the man's pride blames the woman. But where there was so manifest a transgression of the divine command, this was more of an accusation than an excuse. For even though the woman committed the transgression because of the serpent's persuasion, and the man because of the woman's offer, the transgression was nonetheless their own act; for nothing is to be believed or obeyed in preference to God's command.

15 Of the justice of the retribution which the first human beings received for their disobedience

Man held in contempt the command of the God Who had created him; Who had made him in His own image; Who had set him above the other animals; Who had established him in Paradise; Who had supplied him with an abundance of all things for his well-being; and Who had not burdened him with a large number of oppressive and difficult precepts, but Who had given him one very brief and easy commandment to keep him in wholesome obedience. By means of this commandment, God sought to impress upon His creature that He is Lord, and that free service was expedient for him. What followed, therefore, was a just condemnation; a condemnation such that man, who would have become spiritual even in his flesh had he kept the commandment, now became fleshly even in his mind; and he who, in his pride, had pleased himself, was now, by God's justice, handed over to himself. This was not done, however, in

¹²⁵ Cf. Gen. 4,9.

such a way that man was now placed entirely under his own control. Rather, he was divided against himself, and now, instead of enjoying the freedom for which he so longed, he lived in harsh and miserable bondage to the devil: a bondage to which he consented when he sinned. Thus, he was dead in spirit by an act of his own will, and doomed, against his will, to die in body also. Having forsaken eternal life, he was condemned also to eternal death, unless he should be redeemed by grace. And anyone who deems this measure of condemnation to be excessive or unjust certainly does not know how to measure the greatness of the iniquity in sinning where it would have been so easy not to sin.

Abraham is justly renowned for his great obedience, because he was commanded to do an act of the greatest difficulty, namely, to slay his own son;¹²⁶ and so too in Paradise the disobedience was all the greater inasmuch as the command was of no difficulty at all. The obedience of the Second Adam is all the more worthy of renown in that 'He became obedient unto death';¹²⁷ and so too the disobedience of the first Adam was all the more detestable in that he became disobedient unto death. For where the penalty appointed for disobedience is so great and the command of the Creator so easy to obey, who can sufficiently convey how great an evil it is not to obey when so easy a thing has been commanded by so great a power under the threat of so terrible a punishment?

To state it briefly, then: in the punishment of that sin, what is the retribution for disobedience if not disobedience itself? For what is man's misery if not simply his own disobedience to himself, so that, because he would not do what he could, he now cannot do what he would? For although, in Paradise, before his sin, man could not do everything, he did not at that time wish to do anything that he could not do, and therefore he could do all that he wished. Now, however, as we observe in the offspring of the first man, and as the Bible attests, 'Man is like to vanity.'¹²⁸ For who can count the many things that a man wishes to do but cannot? For he is disobedient to himself: that is, his very mind, and even his lower part, his flesh, do not obey his will. Even against his will his mind is often troubled; and his flesh endures pain, grows old, and dies, and suffers all

¹²⁶ Gen. 22,2ff.

¹²⁷ Phil. 2,8.

¹²⁸ Psalm 144,4.

manner of things which we should not suffer against our will if our nature were in every way and in all its parts obedient to our will.

For, now, the flesh is in such a condition that it simply cannot serve our will. And what difference does it make how this comes about, provided only that we confess that it is through the justice of the Lord God, Whom we refused to serve as His subjects, that our flesh, which once was subject to us, now grieves us because it will not serve us? We, however, have not grieved God by our refusal to serve Him, but only ourselves; for He does not need our service as we need that of the body. Thus, what we receive is punishment for ourselves, but what we did was no punishment for Him. Moreover, the pains which are called fleshly are really pains of the soul which arise in the flesh and from the flesh. For what desire or pain can flesh feel in itself, apart from the soul?

When the flesh is said to feel desire or suffer pain, it is either the man himself, as I have argued,¹²⁹ or some part of the soul, which is affected by what the flesh undergoes: either a harsh experience, producing pain, or a gentle experience, producing pleasure. The pain of the flesh is nothing but a distress of the soul arising from the flesh, and a kind of disagreement with what the body is suffering. So too, the pain of the mind, which is called grief, is a disagreement with what has befallen us against our will. Again, grief is usually preceded by fear, which is also something in the soul, not in the flesh; for the pain of the flesh is not preceded by anything that we can call fleshly apprehension, felt in the flesh before the pain comes. Pleasure, on the other hand, is preceded by a kind of appetite which is felt in the body as its own desire: hunger, for example, and thirst, and the feeling which is usually called lust when it occurs in the sexual organs; although lust is the general name for desire of every kind.

Even anger itself was defined in ancient times as being no more than the lust for revenge;¹³⁰ although a man is often angry even with inanimate objects which cannot feel his vengeance, as when, in a rage, he smashes his stylus or breaks his pen when it writes ill. But even this, though irrational, is nonetheless a kind of lust for revenge, and in a certain sense a shadow, as one might say, of retribution: of

¹²⁹ Ch. 2.

¹³⁰ Cf. Cicero, *Tusc. disp.*, 3,5,11; 4,9,21.

the principle that those who do evil should suffer evil. Thus, there is the lust for vengeance, called anger. Again, there is the lust for money, called avarice; the lust for victory at any price, called obstinacy; the lust for glory, called vanity. There are many different kinds of lust, of which not a few have names peculiar to themselves, while others have not. Who, for example, could easily give a name to the lust for mastery, though the evidence of civil wars shows how great a sway it has over the minds of tyrants?

16 Of the evil of lust: a word which, though appropriate to many vices, is particularly ascribed to the urgings of impure love

There are, then, lusts for many things; yet, when the word 'lust' is used without any addition signifying the object of lust, the only thing that usually occurs to the mind is the lust that arouses the impure parts of the body. This lust triumphs not only over the whole body, and not only outwardly, but inwardly also. When the emotion of the mind is united with the craving of the flesh, it convulses the whole man, so that there follows a pleasure greater than any other: a bodily pleasure so great that, at that moment of time when he achieves his climax, the alertness and, so to speak, vigilance of a man's mind is almost entirely overwhelmed. Any friend of wisdom and holy joys who lives a married life but knows how 'to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour',¹³¹ as the apostle admonishes – surely such a one would prefer to beget children without lust of this kind, if such a thing were possible. For the parts created for this purpose would then be the servants of his mind even in the task of procreation, just as his other members serve it in the various tasks distributed to them. They would act at the command of his will, and not because incited by the urging of lust.

But not even those who love this kind of pleasure are moved either to marital intercourse or to impure vice only when they so wish. Sometimes the urge arises unwanted; sometimes, on the other hand, it forsakes the eager lover, and desire grows cold in the body even while burning in the mind. Thus strangely, then, does lust refuse to serve not only the desire to beget, but even the lust for

¹³¹ 1 Thess. 4,4.

lewd enjoyment. Although it is for the most part wholly opposed to the mind's control, it is not seldom divided against itself: it arouses the mind, but it does not follow through what it has begun and arouse the body also.

17 Of the nakedness of the first human beings,
which seemed disgraceful and shameful to them after
they had sinned

It is right, therefore, to be greatly ashamed of this lust, and it is right that the members which it moves or fails to move by its own right, so to speak, and not completely in accord with our will, should be called shameful, which they were not called before man's sin. For, as it is written, 'And they were naked, and were not ashamed.'¹³² This was not because they did not know that they were naked; rather, their nakedness was not yet disgraceful, because lust did not yet arouse those members independently of their will. The flesh did not yet give testimony, as it were, of man's disobedience by disobedience of its own.

But it was not that the first human beings were created blind, as the uninstructed masses believe;¹³³ for Adam saw the animals to which he gave names,¹³⁴ and we read of Eve that 'the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes'.¹³⁵ It is clear, therefore, that their eyes were not closed. They were not sufficiently open, however – that is, they were not attentive enough – to recognise what a blessing they had received in the garment of grace, inasmuch as their members did not know how to oppose their will. When this grace was removed and a punishment commensurate with their disobedience inflicted on them, there appeared in the movements of their body a certain shameless novelty, as a consequence of which their nakedness was made shameful; and, when they noticed this, they were dismayed.

This is why it is written of them that, after they had violated God's command by their overt transgression, 'The eyes of them

¹³² Gen. 2,25.

¹³³ Cf. *De gen. ad lit.*, 11,40.

¹³⁴ Cf. Gen. 2,20.

¹³⁵ Gen. 3,6.

both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons.¹³⁶ 'The eyes of them both were opened', it says; not so that they might see, however, for they could see already, but so that they might distinguish between the good that they had lost and the evil into which they had fallen. Hence the tree itself, which was to make this distinction for them if they laid hands on it into order to eat of it despite God's prohibition, received its name from that event, and was called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.¹³⁷ For the experience of the distresses of sickness also makes the pleasures of health more evident.

And so 'they knew that they were naked' – divested, that is, of the grace that made the nakedness of their bodies of no concern to them, so that it became a source of shame to them when the law of sin warred against their mind.¹³⁸ Thus, they learned what they would have been happier not knowing, had they believed in God and obeyed Him, and so not committed the act which compelled them to learn by experience the harm done by infidelity and disobedience. Therefore, dismayed by the disobedience of their flesh – by the punishment which bore witness, as it were, to their own disobedience – 'they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves *campestria*', that is, loin-cloths, which is the expression that some translators use. (*Campestria* is a Latin word deriving its origin from the young men who covered their shameful parts when exercising naked on the playing-field [*campus*], those who were so covered being commonly called *campestrati*.)¹³⁹

Thus, out of a sense of shame, modesty covered that which was moved by lust to disobey a will which had itself been condemned for the guilt of disobedience. And since that time, the custom of concealing the shameful parts has taken so firm a hold upon all peoples – for all derive from the same stock – that certain barbarians refrain from exposing those parts of the body even in the baths, and keep their coverings on while they wash.¹⁴⁰ And in the dark solitudes of India, those who practise philosophy naked, and hence are

¹³⁶ Gen. 3,7.

¹³⁷ Gen. 2,17.

¹³⁸ Cf. Rom 7,23.

¹³⁹ Cf. Horace, *Epist.* 1,11,18.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Herodotus, 1,10; Plato, *Rep.* 452C.

called gymnosophists,¹⁴¹ nevertheless have coverings on their genitals even though they have none on the other parts of their bodies.

18 Of the sense of shame in sexual intercourse,
whether illicit or marital

The act itself which is performed under the influence of such lust shuns the public gaze. This is true not only of those debaucheries which need places of concealment in order to escape the reproach of human judgment, but also of the practice of fornication, which the Earthly City has made into a lawful form of wickedness: a kind of lust which is permitted and not punishable by any law of that City. A natural sense of shame ensures that even brothels make provision for secrecy; and it was easier for unchastity to dispense with the fetters of prohibition than for shamelessness to abolish the hiding-places of this filthiness.

Whoring, indeed, is called wicked even by those who are wicked themselves: who, even though they are lovers of it, dare not show themselves to be such. But what of marital intercourse, the purpose of which, according to the prescriptions of the marriage-contract, is the procreation of children? This is lawful and honourable, indeed; but does it not still require a private chamber remote from witnesses? Before he begins even to caress the bride, does not the bridegroom first send away all the servants, and even his attendants and all the others who have been permitted to enter because of some tie of kinship? As a certain 'supreme master of Roman eloquence'¹⁴² says, all right actions wish to be placed in the light of day: that is, they desire to be known.¹⁴³ And this right action, too, desires to be known, even though it blushes to be seen; for who does not know what act is performed by a married couple for the procreation of children, when all the ceremonies involved in the taking of a wife point towards that act? Nevertheless, when that act is actually being performed, not even the children who have already been born from it are permitted to witness it. This right action desires recognition by the light of the mind, but it nonetheless shuns the light of the

¹⁴¹ Cf. Diogenes Laertius, I, 122; Tertullian, *Apol.*, 42; Jerome, *Epist.* 53, 1.

¹⁴² Lucan, *Pharsal.*, 7, 62

¹⁴³ Cicero, *Tusc. disp.*, 2, 26, 64.

eye. Why is this, if not because something which is by nature decent is performed in such a way as to be accompanied by shame, by way of punishment?

19 That anger and lust, which are provoked in man with such vicious effects that they must be checked and restrained by wisdom, were not parts of his wholesome condition before he sinned

It is for this reason that those philosophers who have come closer to the truth than others have acknowledged that anger and lust are vicious parts of the soul, in that they are turbulent and disorderly emotions inciting us to acts which wisdom forbids, and therefore needing mind and reason to moderate them. They locate this third part of the soul in a kind of citadel, to rule the other parts, so that, with reason in command and the others parts serving it, justice may be preserved as between all the parts of man's soul.¹⁴⁴

These philosophers therefore admit that the other two parts of the soul are vicious, even in a wise and temperate man. This is why the mind bridles them by suppression and restraint, and recalls them from that which they are unrighteously moved to do, while allowing them to do whatever is permitted by the law of wisdom. Anger, for example, is allowed for the purpose of just coercion, as is lust for the sake of begetting offspring. But in Paradise, before sin arose, these passions did not, I say, exist in their present vicious form. For they were not then moved to do anything contrary to a righteous will, from which it was necessary to force them to abstain by means of the guiding reins, as it were, of reason.

Now, however, when these passions are thus set in motion, they are regulated by those who live temperate, righteous and godly lives, sometimes easily, and sometimes with difficulty; but this is accomplished only by compulsion and struggle: it is not a healthy, natural process, but, thanks to guilt, a weary one. Again, modesty does not conceal the acts of anger and the words and deeds associated with the other passions in the same way that it conceals the acts of lust which are performed by the sexual organs. But is this not simply because, in the case of the other passions, the body's

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Plato, *Rep.*, 586D; 589Cf.

members are not set in motion by the passions themselves, but by the will, after it has consented to the passions? For the will has mastery over the use of such members. For no one who utters a word in anger, or, indeed, strikes another, could do so if his tongue or hand were not in some way set in motion by the command of his will; and those members are set in motion by the same will even when there is no anger. But the sexual organs have somehow fallen so completely under the sway of lust that they have no power of movement at all if this passion is absent, and unless it has either arisen of its own accord or been aroused by another. It is this that makes us ashamed; it is this causes us to avoid the eye of onlookers, blushing. A man would rather be watched by a crowd of spectators as he vents his anger unjustly upon another than by one man as he has lawful intercourse with his wife.

20 Of the most vain wickedness of the Cynics

The dog-philosophers, that is, the Cynics, did not see this when they put forward a view so contrary to human modesty that it can only be called dog-like: that is, unclean and shameless. They believed that since the sexual act is lawful as between husband and wife, no one should be ashamed to perform it in the presence of others, and to have marital intercourse in any street or square. However, a certain natural modesty has prevailed over this erroneous opinion. It is indeed said of Diogenes that he once gloried in doing this, supposing that his sect would come to be thought more noble if its shamelessness was more strikingly impressed on the memory of mankind.¹⁴⁵ However, the Cynics subsequently ceased to act in this way, and modesty, which makes men blush in the presence of other men, prevailed over the erroneous belief that men should seek to resemble dogs.

Hence, I believe that Diogenes, and the others who are reputed to have done the same thing, only went through the motions of having intercourse before the eyes of men, who did not know what was going on under the cloak. I do not believe that such pleasure could have been achieved under the gaze of human onlookers. For those philosophers did not blush to seem willing to have intercourse

¹⁴⁵ Diogenes Laertius, 6,69.

even in a place where lust itself would have blushed to rear its head. We see that, even now, there are still Cynic philosophers about: persons who not only wrap themselves in a cloak, but also carry a club.¹⁴⁶ But none of them dares to do this. Anyone who ventured to do it would be overwhelmed, I do not say with a hail of stones, but certainly with a shower of saliva by the disgusted onlookers.

Without any doubt, then, human nature is ashamed of its lust, and deservedly ashamed. For the disobedient nature of this lust, which has entirely subdued the organs of generation to its own urges and snatched them from the power of the will, is enough to show what retribution has been visited upon man for that first disobedience. And it was fitting that this retribution should appear especially in that part of the body which brings about the generation of the very nature that was changed for the worse through that first and great sin. That sin, perpetrated when all mankind existed in one man, brought ruin upon them all; and so no one can be rescued from the toils of that sin, which was punished by God's justice, unless the sin is expiated in each man singly by the grace of God.

21 The blessing of increase through human fertility
given to man before he sinned was not forfeited by
wrongdoing, but came to be associated with
unwholesome lust

God forbid, then, that we should believe that God's blessing, expressed in the words, 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth',¹⁴⁷ would have been fulfilled by the pair who were set in Paradise by means of that lust which shamed them into covering their members. It was, indeed, only after their sin that such lust arose. It was only after their sin that their nature felt, noticed, blushed at and hid such lust; for when it lost the power to make every part of the body serve it, that nature found a sense of shame. But the nuptial blessing, whereby the pair were instructed to increase and multiply and replenish the earth, still remained, even though they were now offenders; for it had been given before their offence, so that it might be understood that the procreation of chil-

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Apuleius, *Apologia pro se*, 442.

¹⁴⁷ Gen. 1,28.

dren pertains to the glory of marriage, not to the punishment of sin.

Even now, however, there certainly are men who, ignorant of the happy state that existed in Paradise, suppose that children could not have been begotten except in the way that they know: that is, through lust, which, as we see, brings shame even in the honourable estate of matrimony. Some of these do not accept, and, in their unbelief, even deride, that passage of Divine Scripture where it is written that Adam and Eve were ashamed of their nakedness after they had sinned, and so covered their shameful parts.¹⁴⁸ Others again,¹⁴⁹ though they accept the Scriptures and honour them, nonetheless maintain that the words 'increase and multiply' should not be understood as referring to carnal fertility, because it is said elsewhere, with reference to the soul: 'Thou shalt multiply me with strength in my soul.'¹⁵⁰ Thus, when they interpret what follows in Genesis, 'replenish the earth, and subdue it', they understand 'earth' to mean the flesh, which the soul 'replenishes' with its own presence, and which it 'subdues' most effectively when it is multiplied with strength. Carnal offspring, they maintain, could not have been born then, any more than they can be now, without that lust which, when it arose after sin, was noticed with dismay, and hidden. They maintain also that children would not have been born in Paradise, but only outside it: as, indeed, was the case; for it was only after Adam and Eve had been dismissed from Paradise that they came together to beget children, and did beget them.

22 Of the conjugal bond as originally established and blessed by God

We, however, do not in the least doubt that to increase and multiply and replenish the earth according to God's blessing is a gift of marriage, and that God instituted marriage from the beginning, before man's sin, in creating male and female; for the difference in sex is quite evident in the flesh. And the blessing itself was indeed attached to this work of God; for when it is written, 'male and

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Augustine, *De utilitate credendi*, 4; *Enarrat. in Psalm.*, 146, 13.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Augustine, *De bono coniugali*, 2; *De gen. contra Man.*, 1, 30; *Confess.*, 13, 24, 37.

¹⁵⁰ Psalm 138, 3.

female created He them', it is immediately added: 'And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it', and so on.

Certainly, all this can without incongruity be given a spiritual interpretation. We cannot, however, interpret 'male' and 'female' as symbolising something else in each individual man: for example, the distinction between the ruling element and the ruled. For, as appears most clearly from the fact that there are bodies of different sexes, it would be a great absurdity to deny that male and female were created for the purpose of begetting children, in order to increase and multiply and replenish the earth. Also, when the Lord was asked whether it is lawful to dismiss a wife for any cause whatever (for Moses had permitted the giving of a bill of divorcement because of the hardness of heart of the Israelites), His answer had nothing to do with the spirit which commands and the flesh which obeys, or the rational mind which rules and the irrational desire which is ruled, or the contemplative virtue which is superior and the active virtue which is subject to it, or the intellectual power of the mind and the body's senses. Rather, he spoke plainly of the marriage tie which binds both sexes to one another; for He answered and said: 'Have ye not read, that He Which made them at the beginning made them male and female; and that He said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.'¹⁵¹

It is certain, then, that, in the beginning, male and female were constituted just as we see and know that two human beings of different sex are now, and that they are said to be 'one' either because they are united, or because of the woman's origin; for she was created from the side of the man. It is to this first example that the apostle appeals, as to a precedent instituted by God, when he admonishes husbands that each of them should love his wife.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Matt. 19,4ff.

¹⁵² Cf. Eph. 5,25; Coloss. 3,19.

23 Whether procreation would have occurred in Paradise even if no one had sinned, or whether the principle of chastity would there have striven against the rage of lust

If anyone says that there would have been no intercourse or procreation had Adam and Eve not sinned, is he not saying that it was necessary for man to sin in order to complete the number of the saints? For if they would have remained alone by not sinning – because, as some believe, generation would not have been possible for them had they not sinned – then, clearly, sin was necessary if there was to be a number of righteous people instead of only two. But if it would be absurd to believe such a thing, we must believe instead that even if no one had sinned there would have come into being a number of saints sufficient to fill that most blessed City: as large a number as is now being assembled, through God's grace, from the multitude of sinners, so long as the children of this world beget and are begotten.¹⁵³

If sin had not come into being, therefore, marriage, because worthy of the felicity of Paradise, would have produced children to be loved, but without the shame of lust. We do not, indeed, now have any example by which to demonstrate how this might have come about. It is not, however, incredible that the one part of the body which is subject to this lust could, without it, have been subject to the will, just as so many other parts are still subject to it. We move our hands and feet to perform their tasks when we so will, without any conflict and with all the ease that we observe in ourselves and others. This is especially true in the case of craftsmen who, in performing their various corporeal tasks, make use of capacities which, though infirm and slow by nature, are developed by constant practice. Why, then, with respect to the procreation of children, should we not believe that the sexual organs could have been as obedient to the will of mankind as the other members are, if there had been no lust, which arose in retribution for the sin of disobedience?

In discussing the different types of government in his book *De republica*, Cicero derives a simile from the nature of man.¹⁵⁴ Does

¹⁵³ Cf. Luke 20,34.

¹⁵⁴ *De rep.*, 3,25,37.

he not say that the members of the body are governed like children, because of their ready obedience, whereas the vicious parts of the soul are coerced under a harsher rule, like slaves? Now in the order of nature the soul is certainly placed above the body; yet that same soul governs the body more easily than it governs itself. Indeed, this lust which we are here discussing is something to be blushed at all the more because, when it arises, the soul neither has command of itself so effectively as to be entirely free from it, nor does it rule the body so completely that the shameful members are moved by the will rather than by lust. Indeed, if they were so ruled they would not be shameful.

As it is, the soul is ashamed of the body's resistance to it; for the body should be subject to it by reason of its inferior nature. When the soul is at odds with itself in respect of the other passions, it is less ashamed, for it is then conquered only by itself, and so is itself still the victor. This victory is, indeed, disordered and vicious, because it arises from those parts which ought to be subject to reason; but it is still a victory won by the soul's parts, and therefore, as I have said, the soul is conquered only by itself. Such victory is laudable and virtuous only when the soul conquers itself in an orderly fashion, so that its irrational motions are made subordinate to mind and reason, and the reason itself is subject to God. Nonetheless, the soul is less ashamed when its vicious parts disobey it than when the body does not yield to its will and command; for the body is different from it and inferior to it, and its nature has no life without it.

But when, by the authority of the will, restraint is imposed upon those other members without which the organs in which lust is excited contrary to the will cannot satisfy their appetite, modesty is then preserved, not because the delight of sin has been taken away, but because its enjoyment has not been permitted. Beyond doubt, marriage in Paradise would not have known this resistance, this opposition, this conflict between lust and will; or, at least, the will would have been sufficient to control the needs of lust, had there not arisen that guilt of disobedience which, in turn, incurred disobedience as its punishment. The will would then have been served not only by the other members of the body, but also by the sexual organs. In that case, the vessel created for the purpose would have

sown its seed upon 'the field of generation'¹⁵⁵ as the hand now sows seed upon the ground; and modesty would have had no need either to object to my wishing to discuss this subject in greater detail, or to compel me to ask pardon, with an apology to chaste ears. Discussion, unhampered by any fear of obscenity, would then range freely over all that might come to mind in relation to bodily organs of this kind; nor would there be any words which might be called obscene: rather, whatever was said on this subject would be as honourable as what we say when speaking of the other parts of the body.

Therefore, if impure thoughts arise in anyone who approaches what I am now writing, let him recoil, not from nature but from his own guilt: let him censure the deeds of his own wickedness, not the words of our necessity. The modest and religious reader or hearer will very easily pardon my speaking of such things, as long as I refute the unbelief which grounds its argument not on a faith in things outside our experience, but only on its understanding of the facts of our experience. For no one who reads what I say will be offended if he is not disgusted by the apostle's condemnation of the horrible vices of the women who 'did change the natural use into that which is against nature':¹⁵⁶ especially since, unlike the apostle, I am not here mentioning and condemning damnable obscenities. I shall, however, try, as he does, to avoid the use of obscene words in explaining, as well as I can, the processes of human generation.

24 That if human beings had remained innocent and had deserved to remain in Paradise by their obedience, they would have used their genital organs for the procreation of offspring just as they used their other members: that is, by the free choice of their will

The seed of offspring, therefore, would have been sown by the man and received by the woman at the time and in the quantity needed,

¹⁵⁵ Virgil, *Georg.*, 3, 136.

¹⁵⁶ Rom. 1, 26.

their genital organs being moved by the will and not excited by lust. For we move, at our command, not only those members which have bones and joints, such as the hands, feet and fingers, but also those parts which are loosely made of soft tissue, which, when we wish to do so, we can move by shaking, extend by stretching, bend by flexing, and harden by contracting – like those which the will moves, as far as it can, in the mouth and face. Again, even the lungs, which, apart from the marrow, are the most delicate of all the internal organs, and for this reason are protected within the cavity of the chest, are controlled by the will for the purpose of drawing in and expelling breath, and for producing and modulating the voice. Like the bellows of blacksmiths and organists, the lungs serve our will when we breathe out, breathe in, speak, shout or sing.

I say nothing of the control which certain animals have by nature over the covering which clothes their whole body, such that, if they feel anything on any part of it which should be driven away, they can move the particular spot where the unwelcome sensation occurs, and, by twitching, get rid not only of flies which have settled on them, but even of spears which are sticking into them. Man cannot do this; but could not the Creator have bestowed such an ability upon whatever creatures He wished? Man himself, then, could once have received from his lower members an obedience which he lost by his own disobedience. It would not have been difficult for God to make Him in such a way that even what is now set in motion in his flesh only by lust should have been moved by his will alone.

We know, moreover, that there are certain men who have natural abilities very different from their fellows and marvellous by their very rarity. Such people can at will do things with their bodies which are quite impossible for others, and hardly believed when heard. There are those who can move their ears, either singly or both at once. There are those who, without moving their head, can bring all that part of the scalp which is covered with hair down towards the forehead and bring it back again at will. There are those who can swallow an incredible number and variety of objects and then, by a slight contraction of the diaphragm, produce any object they like in perfect condition, as if out of a bag. There are those who imitate the voices of birds and beasts and men, and who can do this so accurately that, unless they are seen, it is quite impossible to distinguish them from the real thing. There are some who can

at will, and without any odour, produce such a variety of sounds from their anus that they seem to be singing in that part; and I myself knew a man who could perspire at will. Also, certain people are known to weep at will, and to shed floods of tears.

Something still more incredible was witnessed by a great many of our brethren in very recent times. In a parish of the Church in the diocese of Calama there was a presbyter named Restitutus. Whenever he liked – and he was often asked to do this by people who wished to see such a marvellous thing for themselves – he could withdraw himself from all sensation, while imitating the cries of a man lamenting, and would then lie motionless, exactly like a corpse. Not only did he feel nothing whatsoever when pinched or pricked, but he was sometimes even burned by the application of fire, and still felt no pain, except afterwards, from the injury. That it was not by effort of endurance, but through loss of sensation, that his body made no movement is proved by the fact that, like a dead man, he was found not to be breathing. However, he later reported that he could hear people talking, as if from a distance, if they spoke more clearly than usual.

Even at the present time, therefore, by many kinds of movement and feeling which occur in men who are leading this troublous life in corruptible flesh, the body serves certain persons in a wondrous fashion, beyond the ordinary limits of nature. What reason, then, is there for us not to believe that, before the sin of disobedience and its punishment of corruptibility, the members of the human body could have been the servants of the human will without any lust, for the procreation of offspring? It was because man forsook God by pleasing himself that he was handed over to himself, and, because he did not obey God, could not obey himself. Hence comes the more evident misery whereby man does not live as he wishes to live. For if he lived as he wished, he would deem himself happy; yet, even so, he would not be truly happy if he lived wickedly.

25 Of true happiness, which is not attained in our present life

For if we consider the matter more carefully, we shall see that no one lives as he wishes unless he is happy, and that no one is happy unless he is righteous. Even the righteous man, however, will not

live as he wishes unless he arrives at that state where he is wholly free from death, error and harm, and is certain that he will always be free from these things in the future. For this is what our nature desires, and it will not be fully and perfectly happy unless it attains what it desires. What man is there at the present time who can live as he wishes, when living itself is not within his power? He wishes to live; he is compelled to die. In what way does he live as he wishes, then, when he does not live as long as he wishes? Even if he should wish to die, how can he live as he wishes, when he does not wish to live at all? And if he wishes to die, not because he does not wish to live, but so that he may have a better life after death, he still does not yet live as he wishes, but will do so only when, by dying, he has achieved the object of his wish.

Behold, however, the man who lives as he wishes because he has forced and commanded himself not to desire what he cannot have, but to choose only what he can have, as Terence says: 'If you cannot do what you want, want what you can do.'¹⁵⁷ Is such a man happy because he is miserable patiently? If he does not love the life he has, it is certainly not a happy life. Moreover, if he does love his life, and is therefore happy, he must necessarily love it more dearly than all other things, since whatever else he loves must be loved for the sake of a happy life. Again, if it is loved as it deserves to be loved – for a man cannot be happy if he does not love his life as it deserves – he who so loves it must necessarily wish it to be eternal. Life, therefore, will only be truly happy when it is eternal.

26 That we must believe that the happy pair who
dwelt in Paradise could have fulfilled the task of
generation without shameful desire

Man dwelt as he wished in Paradise, then, for as long as he desired what God commanded. He lived in the enjoyment of God, from Whose goodness came his own goodness. He lived without any want, and he had it within his power so to live for ever. Food was present, lest he hunger; drink, lest he thirst; and the tree of life, lest age decay him. There was no corruption in the body, or arising from the body, to bring any distress to any of his senses. There was

¹⁵⁷ *Andria*, 305f.

no fear of disease from within or injury from without. He enjoyed supreme health of body, and entire tranquillity of soul.

Just as there was no extreme of heat or cold in Paradise, so there arose in him who dwelt there no desire or fear to hinder his good will. There was nothing of sadness; neither was there any empty pleasure. Rather, true joy poured forth continually from God, towards Whom there glowed 'charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned'.¹⁵⁸ A faithful fellowship of honest love existed between the pair; there was a concord and alertness of mind and body, and God's commandment was kept without labour. In his leisure, man did not know the weariness of fatigue, and sleep never pressed upon him against his will.

When the state of things for mankind was one of such ease and felicity, then, God forbid that we should suppose that it was impossible for the seed of offspring to be sown without unwholesome lust. Rather, the sexual organs would have been moved by the same command of the will as the other members are. Then, not needing to be aroused by the excitement of passion, the man would have poured his seed into his wife's womb in tranquillity of mind and without any corruption of her body's integrity. For, though this cannot be proved by experience, there is no reason for us not to believe that, when those parts of the body were not driven by turbulent heat but brought into use by the power of the will when the need arose, the male seed could have been introduced into the womb with no loss of the wife's integrity, just as the flow of menstrual blood can now come forth from the womb of a virgin without any such loss of integrity; for the seed could enter in the same way as the menstrual flow now leaves. Just as the woman's womb might have been opened for birth simply by the influence of the maturity of the foetus, and without any means of pain, so the two sexes might have been conjoined for the purpose of impregnation and conception by a natural use of the will, and not by lustful appetite.

The things of which I am here speaking are now thought shameful; and so, though I am endeavouring, as far as I can, to describe how such things might have been before they became shameful, our discussion must rather be checked by the restraining voice of modesty than carried forward by my eloquence, such as it is. In any

¹⁵⁸ 1 Tim. 1,5.

case, the possibility of which I am speaking was not experienced by those who might have experienced it. For their sin happened first, and so they were dismissed from Paradise before they could come together in the task of propagation as a tranquil act of will. When such things are now mentioned, then, how can anything occur to the human senses apart from the experience of turbulent lust, and not the placid will that I have imagined?

This is why shame impedes my speech, even though my reason does not lack material for thought. It is, however, certain that Almighty God, the supreme and supremely good Creator of all natures, Who assists and rewards good wills, forsakes and condemns the bad, and orders both alike, did not lack a plan whereby he might complete the fixed number of citizens predestined in His Wisdom for His City, even out of the condemned human race. He does not now choose them for their merits, since the whole mass of mankind has been condemned as it were in its vitiated root. He chooses them by Grace, and He shows His bounty to those who have been redeemed not only in His dealings with them but also in His dealings with those whom He has not redeemed. For each man who is excused from sharing the fate of those in whose just punishment he had shared can recognise that he has been rescued from such evils by a goodness which is not owed to him, but freely given. Why, therefore, should God not have created men in the foreknowledge that they would sin? For that made it possible for Him to show in them and through them what their guilt merited and what His Grace could bestow; and, under God as its Creator and Disposer, the right order of things has not been perverted by the perverse disorder of transgressors.

27 Of sinners, whether they be angels or men, whose perversity does not disturb God's providence

Sinners, therefore, whether they be angels or men, do nothing to impede 'the great works of the Lord, sought out to suit His every will';¹⁵⁹ for, in His providence and omnipotence, God distributes to

¹⁵⁹ Psalm 111,2.

each what is due to each, and knows how to make good use of good and evil alike. Thus, as the merited reward of his first evil will, the evil angel had been so condemned, and made so obdurate in his evil, that he could no longer have a good will. But why should God not have made good use of him and permitted him to tempt the first man, who had been created righteous: that is, with a good will?¹⁶⁰ For man had been so constituted that, if he had trusted in God's help as a good man, he would have vanquished the evil angel, whereas, if, in pride and self-love, he forsook God, his Creator and Helper, he would himself be vanquished. Thus, with a righteous will that was divinely assisted, he would have secured a good reward; but with a perverted will that had forsaken God, he deserved only evil.

Indeed, man could not even trust in God's help without God's help; he did, however, have it within his power to withdraw from the benefits of divine grace by self-love. For just as it is not within our power to live in this flesh without the help of food, yet it is within our power not to live in it at all (as in the case of those who slay themselves), so it was not within man's power, even in Paradise, to live well without God's help, yet it was within his power to live ill; but then his blessedness would not endure and a most just punishment would ensue. Therefore, since God was not ignorant of the fact that man would fall, why should He not have allowed him to be tempted by the malice of the jealous angel? God was, indeed, entirely certain that the man would be vanquished; but He foresaw nonetheless that, with the help of His grace, this same devil would himself be vanquished by man's Seed, to the greater glory of the saints.

Thus it came about that no future event was hidden from God, and yet He did not, by His foreknowledge, compel anyone to sin. By the experience which followed from that sin, however, he demonstrated to all rational creatures, angels and humans alike, how great is the difference between each creature's presumption and God's protection. Who would dare to believe or say that it is not within God's power to ensure that neither angel nor man should fall? Yet God preferred not to remove the

¹⁶⁰ Cf. *De gen. ad lit.*, 11,16.

choice of whether to sin or not from their power; and, in this way, He showed how great is the power of their pride for evil, and of His grace for good.

28 Of the quality of the two cities, the earthly and the heavenly

Two cities, then, have been created by two loves: that is, the earthly by love of self extending even to contempt of God, and the heavenly by love of God extending to contempt of self.¹⁶¹ The one, therefore, glories in itself, the other in the Lord; the one seeks glory from men, the other finds its highest glory in God, the Witness of our conscience. The one lifts up its head in its own glory; the other says to its God, 'Thou art my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.'¹⁶² In the Earthly City, princes are as much mastered by the lust for mastery as the nations which they subdue are by them; in the Heavenly, all serve one another in charity, rulers by their counsel and subjects by their obedience. The one city loves its own strength as displayed in its mighty men; the other says to its God, 'I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength.'¹⁶³

Thus, in the Earthly City, its wise men, who live according to man, have pursued the goods of the body or of their own mind, or both. Some of them who were able to know God 'glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imagination, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise' (that is, exalting themselves in their wisdom, under the dominion of pride), 'they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things' (for in adoring images of this kind they were either the leaders of the people or their followers); 'and they worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, Who is blessed forever'.¹⁶⁴ In the Heavenly City, however, man has no wisdom beyond the piety

¹⁶¹ Cf. *Enarrat. in Psalm.*, 64,22.

¹⁶² Psalm 3,3.

¹⁶³ Psalm 18,1.

¹⁶⁴ Rom. 1,21ff.

which rightly worships the true God, and which looks for its reward in the fellowship not only of holy men, but of angels also, ‘that God may be all in all’.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ 1 Cor. 15,28

Book xv

1 Of the two orders of the human race, going forward from the beginning towards their different ends

Many opinions have been held, and many things said and written, of the felicity of Paradise: of Paradise itself, the life there of the first human beings, and their sin and its punishment. In previous books,¹ I too have dealt with these things, speaking either according to what I have read in the Holy Scriptures, or according to my own inferences from them consistent with their authority. If a more detailed treatment were to be sought, this would give rise to a great number and variety of arguments requiring more volumes than we here have either need or time for. I do not have time to dwell on all the questions which may be raised by idle and pedantic persons who are more ready to ask questions than capable of understanding the answers.

I think, however, that I have now dealt sufficiently with the great and most difficult questions concerning the beginning of the world and of the soul and of the human race itself. I divide the human race into two orders. The one consists of those who live according to man, and the other of those who live according to God. Speaking allegorically, I also call these two orders two Cities: that is, two societies of men, one of which is predestined to reign in eternity with God, and the other of which will undergo eternal punishment with the devil. But this is their end, of which we are to speak hereafter.² For the time being, since enough has been said of the origins of these Cities, whether in the angels, whose number we do not know, or in the first two human beings, it seems to me that I should now undertake to relate their history from the time when those first two human beings began to beget offspring down to the time when the begetting of offspring will cease. For the history of the two Cities of which we are speaking extends throughout the whole of this time or age in which the dying pass away and the newly-born take their place.

¹ Esp. Bk XIV.

² Bks XIX-XXII.

Now Cain was the first son born to those two parents of the human race, and he belonged to the City of man; the second son, Abel, belonged to the City of God.³ We find that, in every case, as the apostle says, 'that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is animal; and afterward that which is spiritual'.⁴ So it is that each man, because he derives his origin from a condemned stock, is at first necessarily evil and fleshly, because he comes from Adam; but if, being reborn, he advances in Christ, he will afterwards be good and spiritual. So it is also with the whole human race. When those two cities began to run through their course of birth and death, the first to be born was a citizen of this world, and the second was a pilgrim in this world, belonging to the City of God. The latter was predestined by grace and chosen by grace; by grace he was a pilgrim below, and by grace he was a citizen above. So far as he himself is concerned, he arises from the same lump which was wholly condemned originally; but God, like a potter – and this simile is not impudent, but wisely introduced by the apostle – made 'out of the same lump, one vessel unto honour, and the other unto dishonour'.⁵ But the vessel unto dishonour was made first, and afterwards came the vessel unto honour; for in every case, as I have said already, man is first reprobate. But though it is of necessity that we begin in this way, we do not of necessity remain thus; for later comes the noble state towards which we may advance, and in which we may abide when we have attained it. Hence, though not every bad man will become good, it is nonetheless true that no one will be good who was not originally bad. Yet the sooner each man changes for the better, the sooner will he secure for himself the title belonging to his attainment and hide his former name under the later one.

It is written, then, that Cain founded a city,⁶ whereas Abel, a pilgrim, did not found one. For the City of the Saints is on high, although it produces citizens here below, in whose persons it is a pilgrim until the time of its kingdom shall come. Then, it will call together all those citizens as they rise again in their bodies; and then they will be given the promised kingdom, where they will reign with their Prince, the king eternal, world without end.

³ Cf. Gen. 4,1f.

⁴ 1 Cor. 15,46.

⁵ Rom. 9,21.

⁶ Gen. 4,17.

2 Of the children of the flesh and the children of the promise

There was, indeed, a kind of shadow and prophetic image of this City of the Saints: an image which served not to represent it on earth, but to point towards that due time when it was to be revealed. This image, Jerusalem, was also called the Holy City, not as being the exact likeness of the truth which is yet to come, but by reason of its pointing towards that other City. Of this image, which is bondage, and of that redeemed City to which it points, the apostle says, when speaking to the Galatians,

Tell me, ye that desire to be under the Law, do ye not hear the Law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the free-woman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.⁷ Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.⁸ So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free, by virtue of the liberty wherewith Christ hath redeemed us.⁹

This mode of interpretation, which comes down to us by the authority of the apostle, indicates to us how we are to understand the Scriptures of the two covenants, the Old and the New. One part of the earthly city, by symbolising something other than itself, has been made into an image of the Heavenly City; and so it is in

⁷ Is. 54,1.

⁸ Cf. Gen. 21,10.

⁹ Gal. 4,21ff.

bondage, because it was established not for its own sake, but in order to serve as a symbol of another City. And since it was in turn symbolised by another symbol, the foreshadowing symbol was itself foreshadowed. For Hagar, Sarah's handmaid, represented, with her son, the image of an image. But the shadows were to pass away with the coming of the light, and Sarah, the free woman, symbolised the free city which Hagar, the shadow, had for her part served to symbolise in another way; and this is why Sarah said, 'Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac', or, as the apostle says, 'with the son of the freewoman'.

We find, therefore, that the earthly city has two aspects. Under the one, it displays its own presence; under the other, it serves by its presence to point towards the Heavenly City. But the citizens of the earthly city are produced by a nature vitiated by sin, while the citizens of the Heavenly City are produced by grace, which redeems nature from sin. Hence, the former are called 'vessels of wrath' and the latter 'vessels of mercy'.¹⁰ This is signified also in the two sons of Abraham, one of whom, Ishmael, was born to the handmaid Hagar according to the flesh, while the other, Isaac, was born to Sarah according to the promise. Both sons came indeed of Abraham's seed; but the one was begotten by the usual means, as a demonstration of nature's way, whereas the other was given by a promise, signifying God's grace. In the one case, the ordinary human condition is shown, whereas, in the other, we are reminded of the beneficence of God.

3 Of the barrenness of Sarah, who was made fruitful by the grace of God

Sarah, indeed, was barren, and, despairing of offspring, desired to have at least through the agency of her handmaid what she saw that she could not have for herself; and so she gave her servant to her husband, to be got with child by him to whom she had herself wished to bear children, but could not.¹¹ In this way, then, she exacted what was due to her from her husband, by making rightful

¹⁰ Rom. 9,22f.

¹¹ Cf. Gen. 16,1ff.

use of another's womb. Ishmael was born, therefore, as all men are born, through the coming together of the sexes according to the ordinary course of nature, which is why he is said to have been born 'according to the flesh'. This is not to say that such blessings do not come from God, or that they are not the work of God, whose creative agent, Wisdom, 'reaches', as is written, 'from one end to another mightily; and sweetly doth she order all things'.¹² But when God wished to show that an unmerited gift was being bestowed of His free grace, it was fitting that a son should be given in a manner not due to the ordinary course of nature. For nature denies children to the kind of union that is possible for a husband and wife at the age reached by Abraham and Sarah. In any case, the woman had been unable to bear offspring even when she was not barren by reason of age; for, even at that age, she was not fruitful.

The fact, therefore, that a nature in this condition had no right to any fruit of posterity signifies that the nature of the human race, vitiated by sin, and for that reason justly condemned, did not deserve any true felicity for the future. Isaac, then, who was born of a promise, is rightly interpreted as signifying the children of grace, the citizens of the redeemed city, the companions in eternal peace, among whom there is no love of a will that is personal and, so to speak, private, but a love that rejoices in a common and immutable good: a love, that is, that makes one heart out of many because it is the perfectly concordant obedience of charity.

4 Of strife and peace in the earthly city

But the earthly city will not be everlasting; for when it is condemned to that punishment which is its end, it will no longer be a city. But it has its good in this world, and it rejoices to partake of it with such joy as things of this kind can confer. And because this is not the kind of good that brings no distress to those who love it, the earthly city is often divided against itself by lawsuits, wars and strife, and by victories which either bring death or are themselves short-lived. For if any part of that city has risen up in war against another part, it seeks to be victorious over other nations even though it is itself held captive by vices; and if, when it triumphs, it

¹² Wisd. 8,1.

is lifted up in its pride, such triumph itself brings only death. If, on the other hand, it considers the vicissitudes which are the common lot of mankind, and is more distressed by the possibility of future calamity than buoyed up by the present prosperous state of things, then its triumph is, again, only short-lived. For it will not be able to rule for ever over those whom, in its triumph, it was able to subdue.

But it is not rightly said that the goods which this city desires are not goods; for, in its own human fashion, even that city is better when it possesses them than when it does not. Thus, it desires earthly peace, albeit only for the sake of the lowest kind of goods; and it is that peace which it desires to achieve by waging war. For, if it conquers, and there is no one left to resist it, there will be peace, which the opposing parties did not have while they strove in their unhappy poverty for the things which they could not both possess at once. It is for the sake of this peace that wearisome wars are fought, and it is by victories which are deemed glorious that it is achieved.

Indeed, when victory goes to those who fought for the juster cause, who will doubt that such victory is a matter for rejoicing and that the ensuing peace is something to be desired? These things are goods, and they are without doubt gifts of God. But if the higher goods are neglected, which belong to the City on high, where victory will be secure in the enjoyment of eternal and supreme peace: if these are neglected, and those other goods desired so much that they are thought to be the only goods, or loved more than the goods which are believed to be higher, then misery will of necessity follow, and present misery be increased by it.

5 Of the first founder of the earthly city: the fratricide whose impiety was mirrored in the founder of Rome, who slew his own brother

The first founder of the earthly city, then, was a fratricide; for, overcome by envy, he slew his brother, who was a citizen of the Eternal City and a pilgrim on this earth. It is not to be wondered at, then, that, long afterwards, at the foundation of that city which was to be the capital of the earthly city of which we are speaking, and which was to rule over so many nations, this first example –

or, as the Greeks call it, archetype – of crime was mirrored by a kind of image of itself. For there also, as one of the Roman poets says in telling of the crime, ‘The first walls were wet with a brother’s blood.’¹³ For this is how Rome was founded, when, as the history of Rome attests, Remus was slain by his brother Romulus. These two, however, were both citizens of the earthly city. Both sought the glory of establishing the Roman commonwealth, but could not both have the glory in doing so that only one would have; for the sway of anyone wishing to glory in his own lordship is clearly less extensive if his power is diminished by the presence of a living colleague. Therefore, in order that one of them should wield entire mastery, his colleague was removed; and what would have been kept smaller and better by innocence was increased through crime into something larger and worse.

The brothers Cain and Abel, on the other hand, did not both have the same desire for earthly things. The one who slew the other was not envious of his brother because his own sway would be diminished if they both exercised lordship; for Abel did not seek mastery in the city which had been founded by his brother. Rather, Cain’s was the devilish envy that the wicked entertain towards the good for no other reason than that they are good, whereas they themselves are evil. A man’s possession of goodness is in no way lessened by the advent or continued presence of a sharer in it. On the contrary, goodness is a possession which is enjoyed more fully in proportion to the concord that exists between partners united in charity. He who refuses to enjoy this possession in partnership will not enjoy it at all; and a man will find that he possesses it more abundantly in proportion to the fullness with which he loves his partner in it.

Thus, the strife that arose between Remus and Romulus showed the extent to which the earthly city is divided against itself; whereas that which arose between Cain and Abel demonstrated the hostility between the two cities themselves, the City of God and the city of men. The wicked, therefore, strive among themselves; and, likewise, the wicked strive against the good and the good against the wicked. But the good, if they have achieved perfection, cannot strive among themselves. While they are making their way towards perfection,

¹³ Lucan, *Pharsal.*, 1,95.

however, and have not yet attained it, there can be strife among them inasmuch as any good man may strive against another because of that part of him with which he also strives against himself. Even within one man, 'the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh'.¹⁴ Thus, the spiritual desire of one man can strive against the fleshly desire of another; or fleshly desire can strive against another's spiritual desire, just as the good and the wicked strive against one another. Or even the carnal desires of two good men, who have, however, not yet achieved perfection, may strive, just as the wicked strive among themselves, until those who are being healed are finally brought to victorious health.

6 Of the infirmities which even the citizens of the
City of God suffer as a punishment for sin during
the pilgrimage of this life, and of which they are
healed by God's cure

Now infirmity of this kind – that is, the disobedience with which we dealt in Book XIV¹⁵ – is the punishment for the first disobedience. It is, therefore, not a part of nature, but a fault; and this is why it is said to the good who are advancing and living by faith in this pilgrimage, 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ.'¹⁶ Elsewhere, it is said, 'Warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man.'¹⁷ And, in another place, 'If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.'¹⁸ And elsewhere, 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.'¹⁹ And in the Gospel, 'If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.'²⁰ Again, concerning sins, which he feared might be an

¹⁴ Gal. 5,17.

¹⁵ Ch. 11.

¹⁶ Gal. 6,2.

¹⁷ 1 Thess. 5,14f.

¹⁸ Gal. 6,1.

¹⁹ Eph. 4,26.

²⁰ Matt. 18,15.

occasion of stumbling for many, the apostle said, 'Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.'²¹

It is for this reason that we are so often taught to forgive one another and to devote such care to the preservation of peace, without which no one will be able to see God.²² Hence the dreadful command given to the servant to repay a debt of ten thousand talents, which had been forgiven, because he did not forgive his fellow servant a debt of a hundred pence. And when the Lord Jesus had told this parable, He continued and said, 'So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.'²³ It is in this way that the citizens of the City of God are healed while they are pilgrims on this earth, as they sigh for the peace of their heavenly country. But the Holy Spirit works inwardly to give effect to the remedy which is applied outwardly. Otherwise, even if God makes use of a creature subject to Him to speak to the human senses in some human form – whether to the corporeal senses or to those very similar ones which we possess when asleep – and does not rule and direct our minds with His inward grace, no preaching of the truth is of profit to a man.

But this is indeed what God does, distinguishing the vessels of wrath from the vessels of mercy according to a most hidden yet just dispensation known to Him alone. He indeed assists us in wondrous and secret ways; and when, as the apostle teaches, the sin which dwells in our members – or, rather, the punishment of the sin – no longer reigns in our mortal bodies, that we should obey it in the lusts thereof; and when we no longer yield our members as instruments of unrighteousness;²⁴ then there is a change in us. This change is such that, under God's rule, man no longer conspires with himself to do evil. Rather, he finds, in his own changed mind, a gentler ruler here; and, hereafter, when he is perfected in health and gifted with immortality, man will reign without sin in eternal peace.

²¹ 1 Tim. 5,20.

²² Cf. Heb. 12,14; Matt. 5,8.

²³ Matt. 18,23ff.

²⁴ Cf. Rom. 6,12f.

7 Of the cause of Cain's crime, and the obstinate resolve to commit it from which, once he had conceived it, not even the word of God recalled him

But as to this matter of God's speaking to man, which I have explained as fully as I could: how did it profit Cain, when God spoke to him in His usual way of speaking to the first human beings – by means of a creature subject to Him, taking on an appropriate form as if He were a fellow creature?²⁵ Did he not commit the crime which he had conceived, of killing his brother, even after the divine word of admonition? For God had chosen as between the sacrifices of the two brothers, esteeming the one but despising the other; and, no doubt, this choice could be recognised by the testimony of some visible sign. God made this choice because the works of Cain were evil and his brother's good; but 'Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.'²⁶ And it is written: 'And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thy sacrifice is rightly offered, but not rightly divided, hast thou not sinned? Be still; for when it shall return unto thee, then thou shalt have the mastery of it.'²⁷

In this admonition or warning which God delivered to Cain, it is not clear why or for what reason He said, 'If thy sacrifice is rightly offered, but not rightly divided, hast thou not sinned?' The obscurity of this passage has given rise to many different interpretations, as each commentator has endeavoured to expound the Divine Scriptures according to the rule of faith. A sacrifice is indeed 'rightly offered' when it is offered to the true God, to Whom alone sacrifice is due. But it is not 'rightly divided' when we do not rightly choose the places or times of sacrifice, or the thing offered, or whom to offer it to, or those to whom what has been offered is distributed for eating. This is to interpret 'divided' as here indicating choices of this kind. An offering may be made at a place which is not fitting; or it may be unfitting in one place, but fitting in another; or it may be unfitting at one time, but fitting at another; or it may be entirely unfitting at any time or place; or perhaps a man keeps for himself the choicest portions of the kind of things which he offers to God;

²⁵ Cf. *De gen. ad lit.*, 8,37.

²⁶ Gen. 4,5.

²⁷ Gen. 4,6f (LXX).

or else the sacrifice is partaken of by a profane person, or by someone else who may not lawfully do so.

Now it is not easy to discover in which of these respects Cain displeased God. When he speaks of those brothers, the apostle John says, 'Be not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.'²⁸ By this, we are given to understand that God did not esteem Cain's gift because it was wrongly 'divided' in the sense that, though he gave something of his own to God, he nonetheless gave himself to himself: as do all who follow their own will and not the will of God; that is, who live with a perverse and not a righteous heart, yet who still offer gifts to God. They suppose that they are by this means purchasing God's help, not in healing their base desires, but in fulfilling them. And this is the way of the earthly city: to worship a god or gods so that, with their aid, that city may reign in victory and earthly peace, not by the counsel of charity, but with lust for mastery. For the good make use of this world in order to enjoy God; but the evil, by contrast, wish to make use of God in order to enjoy this world: those of them, that is, who even believe that God exists and cares for things human; those who do not believe this are in a still worse plight. Thus, when Cain discovered that God had esteemed his brother's sacrifice but not his own, he ought surely to have changed his ways and imitated his good brother, instead of succumbing to pride and envy. But 'Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.' This sin, resentment of another's – indeed, of a brother's – goodness, is one which God particularly deplores; and it was with this sin that God was reproaching him when He asked, 'Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen?' It was because God saw that Cain envied his brother that He reproached him.

Now to men, from whom the heart of another is hidden, it might be doubtful and, indeed, unknown, whether Cain was angry because, as he had learned, he had displeased God by his own malice, or because he resented the goodness by which his brother had pleased God, so that God had esteemed his sacrifice. But God gave the reason why He had refused to receive Cain's sacrifice; and He did this so that Cain should be rightly displeased with himself

²⁸ 1 John 3, 12.

rather than wrongly so with his brother. Thus, though Cain was unrighteous in not 'dividing' rightly, that is, in not living righteously, and so was unworthy to have his offering approved, God showed how much more unrighteous he was in hating his righteous brother without reason. Yet God did not dismiss Cain without giving him a commandment which was holy, righteous and good. For He said, 'Be still; for when it shall return unto thee, then thou shalt have the mastery of it.' Did this mean 'of him', that is, of his brother? God forbid! Of what, then, if not 'of sin'? For God had said, 'hast thou not sinned?' and He then added, 'Be still; for when it shall return unto thee, then thou shalt have the mastery of it.' When it is said that there must be a return of sin to the man himself, this can surely be taken to mean that he should know that he must attribute his own sin to no one but himself.

For this is a wholesome medicine of repentance and a petition for pardon which is not unfitting. Thus, when God says, 'when it shall return unto thee', this is to be understood as meaning 'let it return unto thee, and then thou shalt have the mastery of it', rather than 'it will return, and then thou shalt have the mastery of it': that is, as a command rather than a prediction. For a man will have the mastery of his sin if he does not place it over himself by defending it, but makes it subject to himself by repenting of it. Otherwise, he will indeed be its slave, and it will have the mastery of him, if he lends it his protection when it arises.

But sin can also be understood to mean carnal desire itself, concerning which the apostle says, 'The flesh lusteth against the Spirit'; and among the fruits of the flesh he mentions envy.²⁹ It was certainly envy which provoked and inflamed Cain to the destruction of his brother. And, on this understanding, we are to take 'when it shall return' to mean 'it will return'; that is, 'It will return unto thee, and then thou shalt have the mastery of it.' For this is what may happen when the carnal part of man is aroused: the part which the apostle calls 'sin' in the verse where he says, 'Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.'³⁰ (There are also philosophers who say that this part of the soul is vicious, and that it ought not to drag the mind after it, but should be under the

²⁹ Gal. 5,17ff.

³⁰ Rom. 7,17.

command of the mind, and restrained by reason from unlawful acts.) For when this part of man is aroused to commit some wrongful act, if we then hold our peace and obey the words of the apostle, 'Yield ye not your members as instruments of unrighteousness',³¹ it will return, subdued and vanquished, to the mind, and submit itself to the lordship of reason.

This, then, was God's admonition to Cain, whose anger was so kindled by the torches of envy that he longed to do away with his brother when he ought to have imitated him. 'Be still', God said: that is, Keep your hands from wickedness, and 'let not sin reign in thy mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof'.³² For, if you do not assist it by lessening your vigilance, but restrain it with your stillness, 'it will return unto thee, and then thou shalt have the mastery of it'. Do not suffer it to do anything outwardly and, governed by the benevolent power of your mind, neither will it be moved inwardly.

Something of this kind was also said to the woman in the same divine book, when, after their sin, God examined the sinners and judged them. They all received the sentence of damnation: the devil in the form of a serpent, and woman and her husband in their own persons. And God said to the woman, 'I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children.' He then added, 'And thy desire shall be for thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.'³³ What was said to Cain concerning sin, or the vicious desire of the flesh, is in this passage also said to the sinful woman, and is here to be understood as meaning that a man, in ruling his wife, should be like the mind which rules the flesh. For that reason the apostle says, 'He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh.'³⁴

We should, then, wish to be healed of those sins, for they are our own, instead of condemning them as though they belonged to another. But Cain received God's admonition like the criminal he was. For the vice of envy increased in him, and he lay in wait for his brother and slew him. Such was the founder of the earthly city. He also prefigures the Jews by whom Christ was slain, the Shepherd

³¹ Rom. 6,13.

³² Cf. Rom. 6,12.

³³ Gen. 3,16.

³⁴ Eph. 5,28f.

of the flock of men, who was foreshadowed in Abel, the shepherd of the flock of sheep. But this is a matter of prophetic allegory, of which I shall here say no more. I recollect, however, that I have said something on this subject in my work called *Adversus Faustum Manichaeum*.³⁵

8 For what reason Cain founded a city in the midst of the first beginnings of the human race

It seems to me that I must now defend the historical truth of Scripture, lest it be thought incredible that a city should have been built by one man at a time when, it seems, there were only four men on earth – or, rather, three, for Cain had slain his brother: that is, the first man, the father of all; Cain himself; and Cain's son Enoch, by whose name the city itself was called. But those who are disturbed by this have paid too little heed to the fact that the writer of the sacred history had no need to name all the men who may then have existed, but only those required by the plan of the work which he had undertaken. For the intention of the writer, through whom the Holy Spirit was acting, was to arrive at Abraham by way of a clearly defined succession of generations descended from one man. Then, he was to pass from Abraham's seed to the people of God, which was kept apart from all other nations, and in which were prefigured and foretold all the things to come which were foreseen by the inspiration of the Spirit: the things relating to that City whose kingdom will be eternal, and to Christ, its king and founder. But the writer did not remain silent with respect to that other society of men which we call the earthly city; for it too was mentioned to an extent sufficient to enable the City of God to shine forth by comparison with its opposite.

Now in Divine Scripture, when the number of years lived by those first men is recorded, the account concludes by saying of the person in question, 'And he begat sons and daughters: And all the days' that this man or that lived 'were' so many years, 'and he died'.³⁶ But the fact that those sons and daughters are not named does not prevent us from inferring that, during all the years that

³⁵ *Adv. Faust. Man.*, 12,9.

³⁶ Cf. e.g. Gen 5,4f.

people lived in that first age of this world, many men could have been born and many cities also could have been founded by their co-operation. But it was the purpose of God, by Whose inspiration these accounts were written, to direct our attention from the first to those two societies in their different generations, and to distinguish them. And so it is that, down to the time of the Flood, the generations of men – that is, of those who live according to man – and the generations of the sons of God – that is, of those who live according to God – are woven together in the scriptural narrative, where an account is given of both the separation and the combination of the two societies. Their separation is shown by the fact that their genealogies are recorded separately, the one deriving from the fratricide Cain and the other from the brother called Seth, who was another son of Adam, taking the place of the one whom his brother had slain. Their combination, on the other hand, is shown by the fact that, as the good changed for the worse, they all became bad enough to be destroyed by the Flood, except for the one righteous man whose name was Noah, his wife, his three sons and his three sons' wives. These eight persons alone were worthy to escape in the Ark from the devastation of all mortal creatures.

It is written, then, that 'Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch; and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch.'³⁷ It does not follow, however, that we are to believe that Enoch was his first son; nor is it to be inferred, from the fact that he is said to have 'known' his wife, that this was his first sexual intercourse with her. For the same thing is said of Adam himself, the father of all men, not only at the time of Cain's conception (and Cain seems to have been his firstborn) but also subsequently, where the same Scripture says, 'And Adam knew his wife Eve, and she bare a son, and called his name Seth.'³⁸ Hence, when we read in the Scriptures of the conception of men, we note that this is the form of speech usually, though not always, used, but that its use is not restricted to a couple's first intercourse. Again, the fact that the city was called by Enoch's name does not necessarily confirm the belief that Enoch was his father's firstborn; for it is not out of the question that his father had other sons, but that, for

³⁷ Gen. 4,17.

³⁸ Gen. 4,25.

some reason, he loved Enoch more than the others. Judah, for example, was not a firstborn son, yet Judea and the Jews are named after him.

But even if Enoch was indeed the first-born of the founder of that first city, we should not on that account conclude that Enoch's father founded it and gave his son's name to it at the time of Enoch's birth. For a city is nothing other than a multitude of men bound together by some tie of fellowship; and so a city could not then have been established by one man. However, when that man's household became so numerous that it now had the size of a population, it was certainly then possible for him to establish a city and to give the name of his first-born to what he had established. Also, the lives of men at that time were so long that, among those mentioned in the Scriptures whose ages are recorded, even the one with the shortest span before the Flood attained the age of 753 years.³⁹ Indeed, several even exceeded nine hundred years, though no one achieved the age of one thousand.

Who will doubt, then, that it was possible for the human race so to multiply itself during the lifetime of one man as to become numerous enough to establish not one city, but many? This can be very easily inferred from the fact that from one man, Abraham, the Hebrew people procreated itself in such numbers in not much more than four hundred years that there were 600,000 young warriors in the Exodus of that same people from Egypt.⁴⁰ And this is to say nothing of the Idumaeon race, which does not belong to the people of Israel because begotten by Israel's brother Esau, Abraham's grandson, and the other nations derived from the seed of Abraham himself, but not through his wife Sarah.⁴¹

9 Of the long life of man before the Flood and the greater stature which the human body then had

Thus, no one who prudently considers such things will doubt that Cain could have founded not only a city of some kind, but even a large one, at a time when the lives of mortal men were protracted

³⁹ Gen. 5,31.

⁴⁰ Exod. 12,37f.

⁴¹ Cf. Gen. 25,1ff; 12ff; 36 *passim*.

to so great an age. It may be, however, that some unbeliever will cast doubt upon the immense number of years which, according to what is written in our authorities, men then lived, and deny that this is to be believed. Again, there are some who do not believe that human bodies were then so much greater in stature than they are now. The most noble of the Romans' poets, however, Virgil, tells of an enormous stone set up as a boundary mark of a field: a man of those times seizes it in battle, runs with it, whirls it round and round, and hurls it. Virgil says: 'With such bodies as the earth now produces, twice times six picked men could hardly have lifted that stone.'⁴² He means that in those days the earth as a matter of course produced larger bodies than it does now. How much more would it have done so, then, in the days when the earth was young, before that famous and memorable Flood!

As to the stature of bodies, however, the sceptical are for the most part convinced by the sepulchres uncovered by the attrition of time, or by the action of floods or by various other causes. Bones of an incredible size have appeared in them or fallen out of them.⁴³ On the beach at Utica I myself – not alone, but in the company of several other people – saw a human molar so enormous that if it had been cut up into pieces the size of our teeth it would, as it seemed to us, have made a hundred of them. But I am inclined to believe that that tooth belonged to some giant. For not only were the bodies of men in general larger then than ours are now, but the giants far surpassed all the rest, just as, thereafter, and in our own times, there have nearly always been examples, albeit rare ones, of bodies which have far exceeded others in stature. The elder Pliny, an exceedingly learned man, attests that as more and more ages pass by, the bodies produced by nature are becoming smaller. He notes that Homer also often complains of this in his poems; and Pliny does not deride these complaints as though they were mere poetic figments; rather, he, a writer interested in the wonders of nature, takes them to be accurate statements of fact.⁴⁴ Moreover, as I have said, the stature of the bodies of the men of old is shown even to much later ages by frequent finds of bones, for bones are very durable.

⁴² *Aen.*, 12,899f.

⁴³ Cf. Virgil, *Georg.*, 1,493ff; Herodotus, 1,68.

⁴⁴ Cf. Pliny, 7,16; Homer, *Il.*, 5,302ff; 12,378ff; 445ff.

But the longevity of the men who lived in those times cannot now be demonstrated by anything within our experience. Nevertheless, we should not on that account impugn the accuracy of sacred history. Our impudence in not believing what it narrates would be as great as the evidence of the fulfilment of its prophecies is clear to our eyes. Moreover, Pliny also states that there is even now a race whose members live to be two hundred years old.⁴⁵ Thus, if we believe that places unknown to us now furnish examples of a length of human life lying outside our experience, why should we not believe the same of times unknown to us? Why is it credible that something which does not happen here should happen somewhere else, yet incredible that something which does not happen now should have happened at some other time?

10 Of the account given in the Hebrew Scriptures of the number of years lived by the men of old, which is seen to be different from, and at odds with, our own versions⁴⁶

As to this, there does, indeed, seem to be no little difference between the account given in the Hebrew Scriptures and in our versions of the number of years lived by the men of old. I do not know the reason for this; the difference is not, however, large enough to occasion any dissent as to the great longevity of the men of old. Thus, we find in our versions that Adam, the first man, was 230 years old before he begat the son named Seth, whereas in the Hebrew version he is said to have been 130 years old. But we read in our versions that Adam lived another seven hundred years after he begat Seth, while the Hebrew gives eight hundred years. Both versions therefore agree as to the total number of years that Adam lived.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Pliny, 7,48.

⁴⁶ When Augustine speaks of 'our own versions', he means the Latin translations of the Septuagint which were used by the Church before the reception of St Jerome's translation from the Hebrew. The reader will notice that, in discussing the age of the patriarchs and similar matters, Augustine frequently differs from modern translations of the Bible. Such differences are almost always due to his reliance on translations of the Scriptures earlier than the Vulgate. Cf. *De doct. Christ.*, 2,15ff.

⁴⁷ Gen. 5,3f.

Again, in the generations which follow, the father is said to be a hundred years younger in the Hebrew version than in our versions at the time of the birth of those whose birth is recorded; but the rest of his life, after the birth of the son, is a hundred years less in our versions than in the Hebrew. Thus, the sum of the two numbers is the same in both cases. In the sixth generation there is no discrepancy at all between the two versions. But in the seventh generation, as in the first five, there is the same discrepancy of a hundred years before the birth of the son there mentioned – Enoch, of whom it is related that he did not die, but was translated into heaven because he pleased God⁴⁸ – and the same agreement in the total. For, according to both versions, he was 365 years old before he was translated.

Again, the eighth generation exhibits a certain discrepancy, but it is smaller than the others and dissimilar in kind. For according to the Hebrew Scripture, Methuselah, whom Enoch begat, was twenty years older than in our versions before he begat the son who comes next in order, and not a hundred years younger;⁴⁹ but, once again, these years are found to be added in our versions after the birth of the son, so that the sum total agrees in both cases. Only in the ninth generation, that is, in the age attained by Lamech, the son of Methuselah and father of Noah, is there a discrepancy in the total sum of years, although not a very large one;⁵⁰ for he lived twenty-four years longer according to the Hebrew version than according to ours. Before he begat the son called Noah he is six years younger in the Hebrew than in our versions; but after he begat Noah he lived thirty years longer in the Hebrew version than in ours. Thus, as we have said, if six years are subtracted, the remainder is twenty-four.

II Of the age of Methuselah, whose life appears to have extended fourteen years beyond the time of the Flood

From this discrepancy between the Hebrew version and our own there arises the very well-known difficulty presented by the fourteen

⁴⁸ Gen. 5,21ff.

⁴⁹ Gen. 5,25ff.

⁵⁰ Gen. 5,28ff.

years which Methuselah is reckoned to have lived beyond the time of the Flood. For Scripture tells us that, of all the men who were then on earth, only eight escaped destruction by the Flood in the Ark, and Methuselah was not one of them. According to our versions, Methuselah was 167 years old before he begat the son whom he called Lamech, and Lamech, in turn, was 188 years old before Noah was born to him; and these two figures added together make 355.⁵¹ Add to these the six hundred years of Noah's age at the time of the Flood,⁵² and the total period between the birth of Methuselah and the time of the Flood is 955 years. But all the years of Methuselah's life are reckoned to be 969; for he was 167 years old when he begat the son called Lamech, and he lived for another 802 years after Lamech's birth,⁵³ and this, as I have said, adds up to 969 years. If we now subtract the 955 years from Methuselah's birth to the time of the Flood, the remainder is fourteen years, during which Methuselah was apparently alive after the Flood.

In view of this, there are not a few who consider that Methuselah was alive, but that he was not on earth, where, it is clear, all flesh which nature does not allow to live under water was destroyed. They believe that he was for some time with his father, who had been translated into Heaven, and that he dwelt there until the Flood had abated. For they refuse to doubt the veracity of a text which has been received by the Church as having the greater authority, and they believe that it is the Jewish version, and not the other, which contains what is not true.

But these people will not admit that it is more likely that the translators have here made an error than that there is a false statement in the language from which the Scriptures themselves were translated, by way of the Greek version, into our own tongue. We cannot, they say, believe that the translators of the Septuagint, who all produced their translation at one and the same time and with exactly the same interpretation, could all have made the same mistake, or that they would knowingly have uttered an untruth on a matter of no importance to them. Thus, they claim that the Jews, resenting the transmission to us, in translation, of the Law and the

⁵¹ Cf. Gen. 5,25ff.

⁵² Gen. 7,6.

⁵³ Gen. 5,26.

prophets, altered certain passages in their own texts in order to diminish the authority of ours.

Let anyone accept this opinion, or suspicion, who thinks it proper to do so. It is, however, certain that Methuselah did not continue to live after the Flood; he died in the same year, if what is found in the Hebrew text concerning the number of his years is true. As to the translators of the Septuagint, I must insert a more careful account of how matters seem to me on this question in the proper place, when, with God's help, I come to discuss their times as far as the needs of this work require.⁵⁴ For our present purposes, however, it is enough that, according to both versions, the longevity of men at that time was such that the human race could multiply itself sufficiently to establish a city even in the lifetime of one man, who was the first child born to parents who were then the only occupants of the earth.

12 Of the opinion of those who do not believe that the first men lived as long as Scripture tells us

It is not at all necessary to give ear to those who suppose that years were calculated differently by the men of old: who believe, that is, that they were so short that one of our years equals ten of theirs. Therefore, they say, when anyone hears or reads of someone who lived to be nine hundred years old, he should take this to mean ninety, since ten of their years is one of ours, and ten of ours is a hundred of theirs. Thus, as they understand it, Adam was twenty-three years old when he begat Seth, and Seth himself was twenty years and six months old when Enos was born to him. Scripture says that Seth was 205 years old at the time; but, according to the opinion of those whose view we are here considering, one year such as we have now was then divided into ten parts, and each of those parts was called a year. Each of those parts comprises the square of six, because God finished his works in six days so that He might rest on the seventh: a topic which I have discussed, as far as I could, in Book XI.⁵⁵ Six times six, the square of six, is thirty-six days; and that multiplied by ten comes to 360 days, that is, twelve lunar

⁵⁴ Cf. Bk xviii, 42ff.

⁵⁵ Ch. 8.

months. That leaves five days to be supplied to complete the solar year, plus a quarter of a day, which is why one day, called *bissextus*, is added in every fourth year. These days – the days which the Romans call ‘intercalary’ – were subsequently added by the men of old to balance the number of years.⁵⁶

On this view, Enos, who was begotten by Seth, was nineteen years old when his son Cainan was born, though Scripture gives Seth’s age at the time as 190.⁵⁷ After that, throughout all the generations of men whose ages are listed before the Flood, no instance is found in our version of a man begetting a son when he was a hundred years old or younger, or even 120 years old or not much more. Rather, the earliest age at which anyone is said to have begotten sons is 160 years. For no one, they say, is able to beget sons at the age of ten, or, as those men would call it, a hundred; whereas sexual maturity is complete and the individual capable of procreating offspring by the age of sixteen, which in those ancient times was called 160.

In order to make it seem less incredible that years were calculated differently in days gone by, those who think that they were adduce a great deal of evidence derived from historical writings which shows that the Egyptians had a year of four months, the Acarnanians of six months, and the Lavinians of thirteen months.⁵⁸ The elder Pliny mentions a report in certain writings that one man lived for 152 years and another for ten years more again; that others were alive for three hundred years, while still others attained the age of five or six hundred years; and that not a few even lived to be eight hundred years old.⁵⁹ He, however, considers that all these cases arise out of ignorance of chronology. ‘For some people’, he says, ‘used to reckon summer as one complete year and winter as another, while others treated each of the four seasons as a complete year, like the Arcadians, who had years of three months’. He adds that the Egyptians, whose short year of four months I have already mentioned, sometimes ended the year with the final phase of each moon; ‘and so’, he says, ‘we have reports among them of individuals who lived to be a thousand years old’.

⁵⁶ Cf. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (1970), p. 193.

⁵⁷ Gen. 5,9 (LXX).

⁵⁸ Cf. Censorinus, *De die natal.*, 19; Macrobius, *Saturn.*, 1,12; Solinus, *Polyhist.*, 3.

⁵⁹ Pliny, 7,48.

Certain persons regard these as probable arguments: not because they wish to impugn the veracity of the sacred history, but because they seek to reinforce it against those who find it incredible that the men of old lived for so many years. Thus, they have persuaded themselves, and do not consider it shameful to persuade others, that what was then called a year was so short a time that ten of such years are equal to one of ours, and ten of ours to a hundred of those. But that this contention is completely false can be shown by the clearest evidence.⁶⁰ Before I do this, however, it seems to me that I should not pass over a suggestion which may be thought more credible.

We could certainly have refuted this assertion and convinced its exponents by the testimony of the Hebrew Scriptures, where Adam is found to have been 130 instead of 230 years old when he begat his third son.⁶¹ If this is equal to thirteen of our years, he was beyond doubt eleven years old, or not much more, when his first son was begotten. But according to the established laws of nature which are so well known to us, who can father a child at that age? Let us, however, waive this point; for perhaps Adam could indeed have begotten children at the time of his creation: we cannot believe that when he was made he was as small as our infants are. His son Seth, however, was not 205 years old, as we read in our Scriptures, but 105, when he begat Enos.⁶² On this account, then, he was not yet eleven. And what are we to say of his son Cainan? Although he is found to be 170 years old in our versions, we read in the Hebrew text that he was seventy when he begat Mahalaleel.⁶³ But if seventy years at that time meant seven years, who can beget a child at the age of seven?

13 Whether we ought to follow the authority of the Hebrew text rather than the Septuagint in the reckoning of the years

But when I have said this, I shall at once be told by those who are convinced that the translators of the Septuagint, distinguished and

⁶⁰ Cf. Ch. 14.

⁶¹ Cf. Gen. 5,3.

⁶² Cf. Gen. 5,6.

⁶³ Cf. Gen. 5,12.

praiseworthy men as they were, could not have been untruthful, that this is a falsehood of the Jews. This is a point which has already been sufficiently explained above.⁶⁴ On the face of it, however, which is the more credible alternative: that the Jewish nation, scattered so far and wide, was able to conspire in a single plan to write a false account, and thus deprive themselves of the truth, because they begrudged anyone else a share in the authority of their Scriptures? Or that it was the translators of the Septuagint – Jews themselves, assembled in one place by Ptolemy, the king of Egypt, who had appointed them to their task – who begrudged foreign nations a share in this scriptural truth and agreed to carry out such a plan? Who does not see which of these possibilities is to be the more easily and readily believed?

But God forbid, in fact, that any prudent man should believe that the Jews, however perverse and malicious, could have achieved such a thing in so many texts, so widely dispersed; or that those seventy men of revered memory should, out of jealousy, have concocted a united plan to deprive the nations of the truth. It is, therefore, easier to believe those who say that, when the Septuagint began to be transcribed for the first time from the text in Ptolemy's library, some discrepancy of the kind here discussed might have occurred in one copy, from which, if it was the first such transcription, a widespread error would then have emanated, arising from nothing more than an error on the part of a scribe. It is not absurd to suspect such an error in respect of the question of Methuselah's life, or in the other instance⁶⁵ where the totals do not coincide, and one exceeds the other by twenty-four years. In some cases, however, exactly the same error is exhibited continually, with a hundred extra years appearing in the one version, before the birth of a son who is included in the list, while, after the birth, the same number of years is subtracted in that version, so that the totals coincide. This is found in the first, second, third, fourth, fifth and seventh generations; and, here, the error seems to have as it were a certain consistency which suggests design rather than accident.

In these instances, then, where the numbers given in the Latin and Greek versions differ from those of the Hebrew text, a hundred

⁶⁴ Ch. 11.

⁶⁵ I.e. in the case of Lamech, discussed in Ch. 10.

years is first subtracted and subsequently added again, and this is found consistently in a number of successive generations. In the other cases, the divergence should not be ascribed either to the malice of the Jews or to a diligent and careful plot concocted by the seventy translators. Rather, it should be attributed to the errors of the scribe who first received the text from the library of King Ptolemy, mentioned above, in order to transcribe it. For in these days also, numbers are negligently transcribed, and even more negligently checked, when they do not draw our attention to something which can be easily understood, or which appears to be useful to learn. Who would consider it desirable to learn how many thousands of men there were in each of the tribes of Israel? It is not thought that such knowledge is of profit; and how many men are there to whom there appears to be any profound advantage in it?

But as to instances of the first kind – where, in successive generations, one text mentions a hundred years which are missing from the other, and then, after the birth of the son next to be mentioned, the missing hundred years are added in the one, and the excess subtracted in the other, so that the totals coincide: this is no doubt due to someone who wished to persuade us that the exceedingly long lives of the men of old were in fact due to the extreme brevity of what were then called ‘years’, but who also endeavoured to make this view consistent with the sexual maturity necessary to beget sons. Thus, he thought it proper to suggest to the incredulous that ten of our years are equal to a hundred ancient years, lest they be unwilling to believe that the men of old lived for so long; but he added a hundred years where he did not find the age suitable for begetting sons, and subtracted the same number after the birth of the sons, to make the totals agree. For he wished to make the ages credible and appropriate for the begetting of offspring, without, however, falsifying the total number of years lived by the individuals in question.

That he did not do this in the sixth generation shows all the more clearly that he did it where the circumstances which I have described required it, since he did not do it when they did not require it. For he found in that generation, according to the Hebrew text, that Jared was 162 when he begat Enoch,⁶⁶ which, on his

⁶⁶ Cf. Gen. 5,18.

theory of short years, is sixteen and somewhat less than two months. But that age is already suitable for procreation, and there was therefore no need to add a hundred short years, to make his age twenty-six in our years, or to subtract them after the birth of Enoch, since he had not added them before his birth. So it came about that there is no divergence here as between the two versions.

But let us return to the question of why we read in the Hebrew Scriptures that, in the eighth generation, Methuselah was 182 years old before Lamech was born, whereas, in our versions, instead of the usual addition of a hundred years, we find that he is twenty years younger. These twenty years are restored after Lamech's birth, to complete the total, which is the same in both versions; but if, having regard to the question of sexual maturity, our unknown editor wished us to interpret 170 years as meaning seventeen, there was no need for him to add or subtract anything, because he was already presented with an age suitable for the begetting of sons, which was his reason for adding a hundred years in places where he did not find the age suitable. We could, indeed, fairly suppose that the twenty years were simply the result of a chance mistake, were it not for the fact that, having first subtracted them, he took care to restore them subsequently, so that the total sums should coincide with one another in both versions. Should we, then, suspect a more devious purpose here? He may have intended to conceal his practice of first adding and then subtracting a hundred years by doing the same thing in circumstances where it was not necessary: not, indeed, a hundred years in this case; but still a number of years, albeit a small number, was first subtracted and then restored.

But however the matter be understood – whether what I have suggested is believed or not, or whether, indeed, it is true or not – I should be in no way right to doubt that, when some divergence is found as between the two versions such that they cannot both be a true record of established fact, we should believe the original language rather than versions made by translators into another tongue. (There are, however, three Greek texts, one Latin, and one Syriac, which are found to agree that Methuselah died six years before the Flood.)⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Cf. Augustine, *Quaest. in Hept.*, 1,2.

14 That, in ancient times, the length of years was
the same as it is now

Let us now see how it can be clearly shown that the years by which the exceedingly long lives of the men of old were reckoned were not so short that one of our years would equal ten of theirs, but that they were of the same length as those which we have now, which are, indeed, determined by the turning of the sun. Now it is written that the Flood occurred in the six hundredth year of Noah's life: 'In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the waters of the Flood came upon the earth.'⁶⁸ But why is this said if a year was then so small that it was only one tenth as long as one of ours, and had only thirty-six days? If the term 'year' was so understood in ancient times, then so small a year surely either had no months at all, or, if it had twelve of them, it had months which were only three days long. How, therefore, could it be said here, 'In the six hundredth year, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month', unless months then were the same as they are now? How otherwise could it be said that the Flood commenced on the twenty-second day of the seventh month? And then subsequently, at the end of the Flood, we read, 'And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat. And the waters decreased continually until the eleventh month. And in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen.'⁶⁹

If, therefore, these months were like the ones that we have now, then so, surely, were the years. Certainly, months of three days could not have had twenty-seven days. Or, to reduce everything in proportion, and say that the thirtieth part of three days was then called a day: in this case, the great Flood which is said to have lasted forty days and nights⁷⁰ did not take as much as four of our days. But who can bear such absurdity and vanity? Let us, then, remove this error, which wishes to support the truth of our Scriptures by false conjecture, only to destroy it elsewhere. In short, a day then was as long as it is now, determined by a twenty-four hour cycle of day and night. A month then was as long as it is now, being

⁶⁸ Gen. 7,10f.

⁶⁹ Gen. 8,4.

⁷⁰ Gen. 8,6.

the period encompassed by the waxing and waning of the moon. A year was as long then as it is now, being made up of twelve lunar months, with the five and a quarter days added to make it coincide exactly with the course of the sun. And the six hundredth year of Noah's life was a year of this kind, in the second month of which, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the Flood began, in which it is said that immense rains fell continually for forty days; and these days consisted not of a little more than two hours, but of twenty-four hour cycles of day and night. By the same token, the years attributed to the men of old who lived to be nine hundred years old and more were as long as those of Abraham, who lived to be 170;⁷¹ and of his son Isaac after him, who lived to be 180;⁷² and of Isaac's son Jacob, who lived to be 150;⁷³ and, many years later, of Moses, who lived to be 120;⁷⁴ and of the men of our own time, who live to be seventy or eighty or not much more, of which ages it is said that 'more than this is labour and sorrow'.⁷⁵

The difference in numbers found as between the Hebrew version and our own is not, then, a disagreement as to the longevity of the men of old; and if the difference is such that both versions cannot be true, the facts of the matter must be sought in the language from which our version has been translated. Although the opportunity to do this is open to anyone anywhere in the world who wishes to take it, however, it is not without significance that no one has yet presumed to amend, by reference to the Hebrew text, the many passages where the translators of the Septuagint are seen to depart from it. For this degree of difference has not been regarded as a mistake; nor do I consider that it should be regarded as such. Rather, where there has been no error on the part of a scribe, and where the sense that they give is consistent with the truth and proclaims the truth, it behoves us to believe that the translators of the Septuagint chose to differ from the original not in pursuance of their task as translators, but in the exercise of their liberty as prophets.

It is with good reason, then, that, when making use of the testimony of Scripture, the apostolic authority is found to cite not only the Hebrew text, but the Septuagint also. But I have promised to

⁷¹ Cf. Gen. 25,7.

⁷² Gen. 25,28.

⁷³ Cf. Gen. 47,28.

⁷⁴ Deut. 34,7.

⁷⁵ Psalm 90,10.

speaking more carefully of this in a more appropriate place, with God's help.⁷⁶ For the time being, I confine myself to saying that we must not doubt that, at a time when men lived for so long, it was possible for a city to be founded by a man who was the son of the first man of all. But I speak, of course, of an earthly city, not of that City which is called the City of God, for the sake of which I have taken in hand the labour of writing so long a work.

15 Whether it is credible that men of the first age abstained from intercourse until the age at which they are recorded as having begotten sons

Someone will now ask,

Are we to believe that a man who intended to beget sons and who had not resolved to remain continent, nonetheless abstained from sexual intercourse for a hundred years and more, or, according to the Hebrew version, for not much less: that is, for eighty, seventy or sixty years; or that, if he did not abstain, he was quite incapable of producing offspring?

This question may be solved in two ways. Either sexual maturity was then reached later, in proportion to the greater length of life as a whole, or (and this seems to me to be the more credible solution), it is not the first-born sons who are mentioned here, but only those needed to establish a line of succession to Noah, from whom, as we see, the line then extends to Abraham, and then again down to a determinate point in time, as far as was necessary to indicate, by a record of the generations, the course of that most glorious City which is a pilgrim in this world while seeking its supernal fatherland.

It cannot be denied that Cain was the first of all those born from the union of man and woman. For we read that Adam said at his birth, 'I have gotten a man from the Lord';⁷⁷ and he would not have said this had Cain not been the first man to be added by birth to those two. Then came Abel, who was slain by his elder brother, thereby prefiguring, as it were, the pilgrim City of God. For it was

⁷⁶ Cf. Bk xviii, 42ff.

⁷⁷ Gen. 4, 1.

first shown in him that the City of God was to suffer unjust persecution at the hands of the ungodly and, so to speak, earth-born: that is, of those who delight in their earthly origin and rejoice in the earthly felicity of the earthly city. But it is not revealed how old Adam was when he begat these sons, Cain and Abel.

Thereafter, the generations divide into the line of Cain and the line of the son whom Adam begat to fill the place of the one slain by his brother, whom Adam called Seth, saying, as it is written, 'God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.'⁷⁸ There are, then, two lines of descent, the one from Seth and the other from Cain; and, as we have said, these two distinct orders of mankind reflect the two cities: the one Heavenly, which is a pilgrim in this world, and the other earthly, which longs for earthly things and clings to them as its only joys. But although Adam's progeny through the line of Cain is enumerated in detail down to the eighth generation, there is nowhere any mention of the age at which anyone begat the person recorded after him. For the Spirit of God did not wish to mark the ages before the Flood by the generations of the earthly city; rather, He preferred to do so by those of the Heavenly City, as being more worthy of commemoration.

Moreover, when Seth was born, Scripture is not, in this case, silent as to his father's age;⁷⁹ but Adam had already begotten other children, and who would venture to affirm that Cain and Abel were the only ones? From the fact that they are the only ones whose names are recorded for the sake of properly establishing the order of the generations, it certainly does not follow that they were Adam's only offspring down to that time. For, even though the names of all the others are veiled in silence, we read that 'Adam begat sons and daughters.' Who, therefore, wishing to avoid the guilt of presumption, would dare to say how many children were begotten by Adam?

Moreover, when, after the birth of Seth, Adam said, 'God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew', it is possible that the divine will prompted him to say this not because Seth was the first in order of time to be born after Abel, but because

⁷⁸ Gen. 4,25.

⁷⁹ Gen. 5,3.

it was Seth who was to bring his brother's holiness to fulfilment. Again, it is written, 'And Seth lived 205 years' – 105, according to the Hebrew version – 'and begat Enos';⁸⁰ but what reflective person could assert that Enos was Seth's first-born? For, if he were, we should have to wonder at it that Seth abstained from intercourse for so many years without any intention of continence, or, if he did have intercourse, that he did not beget offspring; for we also read of him that 'he begat sons and daughters, and all the days of Seth were 912 years, and he died'.⁸¹

So also with all those whose ages are recorded subsequently, of whom also it is said that they begat sons and daughters. Thus, it is by no means obvious that a child mentioned by name is indeed the first-born. On the contrary, it is not believable that those fathers were sexually immature, or that they lacked wives or offspring, for so great a part of their lives; and so it is not believable either that those sons were the first to be born to them. Rather, the writer of the sacred history intended to trace the passage of time through successive generations until he arrived at the birth and life of Noah, during whose lifetime the Flood occurred. Thus, the children whom he mentioned were clearly those who came in the line of descent, rather than those who were the first to be born to their parents.

To make the matter clearer, I will adduce an example to show beyond doubt that what I say may be taken as true. The evangelist Matthew, wishing to commend to our memory the genealogy of the Lord according to the flesh through a series of ancestors, begins with father Abraham and, intending to arrive first at David, says, 'Abraham begat Isaac.' But why did he not mention Ishmael, who was Abraham's first-born? And he says, 'And Isaac begat Jacob'; but why did he not mention Esau, who was Isaac's first-born? He did not do so because he could not arrive at David by way of those other sons. Matthew then goes on, 'and Jacob begat Judah and his brethren'. Was Judah his first-born, then? And he says, 'Judah begat Phares and Zara'; but neither of these twin brothers was Judah's first-born: he had begotten three children before them. Thus, Matthew retained in his account of the generations only those names which would bring him down to David, and thence to his

⁸⁰ Gen. 5,6.

⁸¹ Gen. 5,7f.

intended goal. And we can understand from this that the men of old who lived before the Flood were mentioned not as first-born sons, but as those through whom the order of the generations could be traced down to the patriarch Noah. Therefore, we need not fatigue ourselves with the obscure and unnecessary question of when they attained sexual maturity.

**16 That the present law pertaining to marriage
between blood-relations could not apply to the men
of the earliest times**

After the first marriage of the man made from the dust and his wife, created from the man's side, the human race had need of the union of males and females in order to multiply itself by begetting offspring. But there were then no other human beings apart from those who had been born of the first two. Therefore, men took their sisters as wives. In ancient times, this was acceptable, because done under the compulsion of necessity; now, however, it is damnable because forbidden by religion. For affection is now given its proper place, so that men, for whom it is beneficial to live together in honourable concord, may be joined to one another by the bonds of diverse relationships: not that one man should combine many relationships in his sole person, but that those relationships should be distributed among individuals, and should thereby bind social life more effectively by involving a greater number of persons in them. Thus, 'father' and 'father-in-law' are the names of two different relationships; and so the ties of affection extend to a greater number of persons when each has one man as his father and another as his father-in-law. When brothers and sisters were joined together in marriage, however, the one man Adam was compelled to be both father and father-in-law to his sons and daughters. So too, his wife Eve was both mother-in-law and mother to her children of both sexes; whereas if there had been two women, one as mother and the other as mother-in-law, the bond of social affection would have operated more widely. Again, a sister also, because she had become a wife as well, united two relationships in herself, whereas if these had been distributed between two people, one a sister and the other a wife, the number of persons bound together in the closeness of fellowship would have been increased. But this state of affairs could

not exist when the only human beings were brothers and sisters, the children of the first human couple. It could exist only when there was a plentiful supply of women who could be wives without also being sisters. Then, not only was there no longer any need for brothers and sisters to marry; it also became unlawful for them to do so. For if the grandchildren of the first human beings, who by that time could have taken their cousins as wives, were joined in marriage to their sisters, there would then not have been two relationships united in one person, but three; which relationships should be distributed among different individuals, in order to unite a greater number in the closeness of affection. For the marriage of brothers with sisters would then have made one man the father, father-in-law and uncle of his own children. By the same token, his wife would be the mother, aunt and mother-in-law of their shared children. And the children themselves would be not only brothers and sisters and spouses to one another, but also cousins, as being the offspring of brothers and sisters. If, however, each of these relationships were assigned to a different individual, they would then connect nine people instead of three to each of them. For one man would have one person as his sister, another as his wife, another as his cousin, another as his father, another as his uncle, another as his father-in-law, another as his mother, another as his aunt, and another as his mother-in-law; and so the social bond would extend not merely to a small group, but ever more widely, to connect a large number more closely together.

We notice also that, as the human race has increased and multiplied, this rule has come to be observed even among the impious worshippers of many false gods. For although their perverse laws may permit brothers and sisters to marry, their actual custom is better, and they prefer to shun the freedom to do this. In the first ages of the human race, it was generally permitted to take a sister in marriage; but this practice is now so much deplored that it is as though it could never have been lawful. For what achieves most in influencing or offending human sensibilities is custom; and, in this case, custom restrains us from immoderate lust, so that men are right when they judge it wicked to disregard or transgress custom. For if it is wicked to pass beyond the boundary of one's own property out of greed for possession, how much more wicked is it to subvert a moral boundary out of lust for sexual intercourse! We

have also found that, for moral reasons, marriages between cousins are rare even in our own times, because, even though such marriages are permitted by the law, the degree of kinship involved in them is only one step away from that of brother and sister. Such marriages were not prohibited by divine Law, and they have not yet been forbidden by human law either;⁸² but abhorrence was felt for an act which, though lawful, bordered on the unlawful because marriage with a cousin seemed to be almost the same as marriage with a sister. For cousins are called brothers and sisters even among themselves, because of the closeness of their blood relationship, which is almost that of full brothers and sisters.

To the patriarchs of antiquity, it was a matter of religious duty to ensure that the bonds of kinship should not gradually become so weakened by the succession of the generations that they ceased to be bonds of kinship at all. And so they sought to reinforce such bonds by means of the marriage tie before kinship became too remote, thereby calling kinship back, so to speak, as it fled. Thus, when the world was now full of people, although they did not like to marry sisters with whom they had either a father or a mother or both parents in common, they nonetheless liked to take wives from within their own family. Who would doubt, however, that the state of things at the present time is more virtuous, now that marriage between cousins is prohibited?⁸³ And this is not only because of the multiplication of kinship bonds just discussed: it is not merely because, if one person cannot stand in a dual relationship when this can be divided between two persons, the number of family ties is thereby increased. In addition, there is present in man a certain sense of honour, which is both natural and laudable, which prompts him not to direct towards a woman whom he is bound to respect and honour as a kinswoman that lust – and lust it is, even though necessary for procreation – which, as we see, occasions shame even within the chastity of marriage.

As far as the race of mortals is concerned, then, the coupling of male and female is the seedbed, as it were, of a city. But the earthly

⁸² Marriage between cousins was, in fact, prohibited by the Emperor Theodosius I (see Ps. - Aurelius Victor, *Epitome de caesaribus*, 48; Ambrose, *Epist.* 60,5. This is a fact that Augustine seems to remember in the next paragraph. See also Plutarch, *Quaest. Rom.*, 108.

⁸³ See n. 82.

city has need of generation only, whereas the Heavenly has need of regeneration also, to escape the injury associated with generation. The sacred narrative is silent as to the question of whether, before the Flood, there was any corporeal and visible sign of regeneration, like the circumcision which was commanded of Abraham after it,⁸⁴ and, if so, of what kind it was. Scripture is not, however, silent as to the sacrifices offered to God by men of the most remote antiquity. This is made clear by the story of the first two brothers; and we read also that Noah offered victims to God after the Flood, when he had emerged from the Ark.⁸⁵ I have already spoken on this subject in earlier books, observing that the demons, who arrogate divinity to themselves and desire to be believed in as gods, demand sacrifices for themselves and rejoice in honours of that kind for no other reason than that they know that true sacrifice is due only to the true God.⁸⁶

17 Of the two fathers and leaders who were both begotten by the same parent

Adam, therefore, was the father of both races: that is, of the race whose successive members belong to the earthly city, and of that whose members belong to the Heavenly City. But after the slaying of Abel, with the wondrous symbolism contained in that slaying, two fathers were appointed, one for each of those races: Cain and Seth, in whose sons, whose names are duly recorded, indications of these two cities began to emerge with increasing clarity in the race of mortals.

Cain, indeed, begat Enoch, and built a city in his name: that is, the earthly city, which is not a pilgrim in this world, but which finds its rest in its own temporal peace and felicity. Now the name Cain means 'possession', which is why, when he was born, either his father or his mother said, 'I have gotten a man from the Lord.' And Enoch means 'dedication'; for the earthly city is dedicated here, where it is built, since the end of what it strives after and desires is here. But Seth means 'resurrection', and the name of his

⁸⁴ Gen. 17,10ff.

⁸⁵ Gen. 8,20.

⁸⁶ Cf. Bk x,4ff; 26.

son, Enos, means 'man': not in the same sense as 'Adam' does, however; for although that name does indeed mean 'man', it is used in that language – in Hebrew, that is – to mean both male and female. Thus, it is written: 'Male and female created He them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam.'⁸⁷ This leaves no doubt that although the woman was called Eve as her own proper name, the name Adam, which means 'man', belonged to them both. Those who understand Hebrew, however, assert that, whereas Enos also means 'man', its sense is such that it cannot also be a woman's name. The name Enos, then, suggests 'son of resurrection'; and after the resurrection there will be neither marriage nor giving in marriage. For there will be no generation there, when regeneration has led us thither.

Moreover, I think it not inappropriate to note here that, in the account of the generations descended from the man called Seth, although he is said to have begotten sons and daughters, there is no express mention of the name of any woman; whereas at the end of the account of those descended from Cain, the last woman to be born is named. For we read:

Methusael begat Lamech. And Lamech took unto him two wives; the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle. And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ. And Zillah, she also bare Tubal-cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron: and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.⁸⁸

This is the extent of the generations of Cain, which, beginning with Adam, and including Adam, amount to eight in all: that is, seven generations down to Lamech, who was the husband of two wives, and an eighth generation consisting of his children, among whom there is mentioned a woman. In this way, it is elegantly signified that in the earthly city, even down to its end, there will be carnal generation resulting from the conjunction of male and female. That is why the wives of this man, who is the last father to be named in the account of the generations of Cain, are mentioned by

⁸⁷ Gen. 5.2.

⁸⁸ Gen. 4.18ff.

their own names, which, after Eve, is not found to be true in any other case before the Flood. Now Cain, which means 'possession', is the founder of the earthly city, and his son, in whose name that city was founded, is called Enoch, which means 'dedication'. This indicates that this city has its beginning and end on earth, where there is no hope of anything beyond what can be seen in this world. The name Seth, on the other hand, means 'resurrection'. A separate account is given of the generations of which he is the father; and we must now examine what the sacred narrative says of his son.

18 The symbolism of Abel, Seth and Enos, with reference to Christ and His body, the Church

The Scripture says, 'And to Seth there was born a son, who hoped to call upon the name of the Lord God.'⁸⁹ Here, indeed, is a testimony which cries the truth aloud. It is in hope, then, that man lives as a 'son of resurrection'; it is in hope that the City of God lives while it is a pilgrim here, begotten of faith in the resurrection of Christ. For Abel's name means 'lamentation', and that of his brother Seth means 'resurrection'. Thus, in those two men are pre-figured the death of Christ and His resurrection to life from the dead; and from this faith – that is, from the faith of a man who 'hoped to call upon the name of the lord God' – is begotten the City of God here.

'For we are saved by hope', says the apostle; 'but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.'⁹⁰ Now who could fail to understand the sublimity of the symbolism here? For did not Abel hope to call upon the name of the Lord God to Whom, as Scripture records, his sacrifice was so acceptable? And did not Seth, of whom it is said 'God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel', also hope to call upon the name of the Lord God? Why, therefore, should a hope which is understood to be common to all godly men be attributed especially to Enos? Surely, this was done because he is recorded as the first offspring of the father who began the line which is set apart

⁸⁹ Gen. 4,26.

⁹⁰ Rom. 8,24ff

for a better destiny: that is, for the Heavenly City. It was for this reason fitting that there should be prefigured in him the man – that is, the society of men – who lives not according to man, in the felicity of things earthly, but according to God, in the hope of eternal felicity. It is not said that ‘he hoped in the Lord God’, or that ‘he called upon the name of the Lord God’; rather, the Scripture says that he ‘hoped to call upon the name of the Lord God’. And what is this ‘he hoped to call’ if not a prophecy that a people would arise which, according to election by the grace of God, would call upon the name of the Lord God? That is, as another prophet says, in a verse which the apostle takes to be referring to the people who belong to God’s grace: ‘And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the lord shall be delivered.’⁹¹ For when the Scripture says, ‘and he called his name Enos’, which means ‘man’, and then at once adds that ‘he hoped to call upon the name of the Lord God’, this is enough to show that man is not to place hope in himself; for, as we read elsewhere, ‘Cursed be the man that trusteth in man.’⁹² Thus, man must not place hope in himself, so that he may become a citizen of that other City and not of the one dedicated to this age and named after Cain’s son. He must not, that is, place his hope in the transient course of this mortal world, but in the immortality of everlasting bliss.

19 The significance of Enoch’s translation

The line of descent of which Seth is the father also contains the name that means ‘dedication’, in the generation seventh from Adam, counting Adam himself; for Enoch means ‘dedication’, and that was the name of the seventh man in line of descent from Adam. Now Enoch was translated into heaven because he pleased God; and his number in the order of the generations is the symbolic number which also made the Sabbath a consecrated day: that is, seventh from Adam. He is also the sixth from Seth, the father of those generations who are distinguished from the progeny of Cain; and it was on the sixth day that man was created and God brought His works to their consummation. The translation of Enoch therefore

⁹¹ Joel 2,32; cf. Rom. 10,13.

⁹² Jer. 17,5.

prefigures our own dedication, which was deferred, but which is now accomplished in the person of Christ, our Head, Who was Himself translated into Heaven when He had risen from the dead, to die no more. But another dedication yet remains to be accomplished: that of the whole house of which Christ Himself is the foundation;⁹³ and this will be deferred until the end, when there will be the resurrection of all those who are to die no more. It does not matter whether we call this house the House of God or the Temple of God or the City of God, and none of these names is at odds with customary Latin speech. Virgil, for example, uses the name 'the house of Assaracus' for the greatest city of the Empire, meaning the Romans, who trace their origin, through the Trojans, from Assaracus. He also calls the Romans 'the house of Aeneas' because Rome was founded by the Trojans who came to Italy under the leadership of Aeneas.⁹⁴ In this respect, the poet imitated Holy Scripture, in which the Hebrew people, even when very great, is called 'the house of Jacob'.

20 Why Cain's line ends at the eighth generation,
while Noah, descended from the same father, Adam,
belongs to the tenth

Someone will say,

The writer of this history, in recording the generations of Adam through his son Seth, intended to arrive at Noah, in whose time the Flood occurred, and then to give a connected account of the succession of births down to Abraham, with whom the evangelist Matthew begins his own account of the generations down to Christ, the eternal King of the City of God. What, however, was his intention in recording the line of descent from Cain, and to what did he wish this record to lead?

The answer is: To the time of the Flood, in which the whole of that race of the Earthly City was destroyed. It was restored from the sons of Noah, however, for this earthly city, and this society of men who live according to man, cannot wholly cease to be until the end of this world; for the Lord says that the children of this world

⁹³ Cf. Eph. 2,20.

⁹⁴ Cf. *Aen.*, 1,284; 3,97.

generate and are generated.⁹⁵ But the City of God, which is a pilgrim in this world, is led by regeneration to another world, whose children neither generate nor are generated.

In this world, then, generation is common to both cities, although, even here, the City of God has many thousands of citizens who abstain from the act of generation. The other city also has those who imitate this abstinence, so to speak; but these are in error. For among those who belong to the earthly city are those who have deviated from the faith of the City of God and have established the various heresies; and these indeed live according to man, and not according to God.⁹⁶ The Indian gymnosophists also, who practise their philosophy naked in the solitudes of India, are citizens of the earthly city; yet they refrain from generation.⁹⁷ But such abstinence is only good when practised in accordance with faith in the Supreme Good, which is God. We do not, however, find anyone who practised it before the Flood. Even Enoch himself, the seventh in descent from Adam, who is said to have been translated into heaven instead of dying, begat sons and daughters before he was translated, among whom was Methuselah, through whom passed the line of descent which was to be recorded.

Why, therefore, are there so few descendants recorded in the generations of Cain, assuming that the line had to be brought down as far as the Flood, and assuming also that men were not then so late in reaching sexual maturity that they lacked offspring for a hundred years or more? For the author of the Book of Genesis intended to trace the generations from the seed of Seth in order to arrive at Noah, and then to follow the necessary sequence once more. But if he had no such intention to trace the generations of Cain down to a specific person, what need was there for him to pass over the first-born sons in order to reach Lamech, with whose children the end of the connected series is reached, that is, in the eighth generation from Adam, and the seventh from Cain? It is as if there were to be some further connexions added subsequently, to bring the account down to either the people of Israel, in whom the earthly Jerusalem displayed a prophetic figure of the Heavenly City, or to Christ 'according to the flesh, Who is over all, God blessed for

⁹⁵ Cf. Luke 20,34.

⁹⁶ Cf. Augustine, *De haer.*, 25,31.

⁹⁷ Cf. Bk XIV,17.

ever',⁹⁸ the builder and ruler of Jerusalem on high. But this could not be, since the whole of Cain's progeny was obliterated by the Flood.

This being so, we may suppose that this record of the generations is based upon first-born sons. Why, then, are there so few of them? Indeed, there could not have been so few of them down to the time of the Flood, unless we assume that their fathers abstained from the business of procreation until they reached sexual maturity at the age of a hundred – unless we assume, that is, that men were at that time late in reaching sexual maturity, in proportion to the length of their lives. For if they were all thirty years old when they began to beget sons, then, if we multiply thirty by eight (for there are eight generations, including the children of Adam and Lamech), we have 240 years. Can it be, then, that they produced no children during the whole interval from that time down to the Flood?

What reason, then, did the writer have for not wishing to record the subsequent generations? For, according to our versions, 2,262 years are reckoned to have elapsed from Adam down to the Flood, and 1,656 according to the Hebrew. If we believe the smaller number to be the more accurate, and subtract 240 years from 1,656, is it really credible that for upwards of 1,400 years – the remaining period down to the Flood – Cain's progeny should have abstained from begetting?

But let whoever is disturbed by this remember that when I asked how we could believe that the men of old could have refrained from begetting sons for so many years, I proposed two ways of solving the problem: either that they were late in reaching sexual maturity, in proportion to their length of life, or that the sons recorded in the genealogy were not their first-born, but those through whom the author of the Book of Genesis could arrive at the person whose genealogy he intended to trace, as in the generations of Seth, where the objective was Noah. Thus, if, in the generations of Cain, no person occurs whom there would be a special reason for mentioning, passing over the first-born and naming only those through whom the author might arrive at such a person, then the only remaining possibility is delayed sexual maturity, such that men were not then capable of begetting children until they were more than a hundred

⁹⁸ Rom. 9,5.

years old. In this case, the order of the generations of Cain might pass through the first-born and still descend for so great a number of years down to the Flood.

There may, however, be some more secret reason, hidden from me, why, having traced the genealogy of the city which we call earthly down to Lamech and his children, the author of the Book of Genesis then ceased to record the other generations that may have existed down to the Flood. Again, there is possibly another reason – and this would remove the necessity of supposing that sexual maturity was so long delayed in the men of old – why the order of the generations of Cain was not traced through the first-born sons: namely, that the city which Cain established in the name of his son Enoch extended its rule far and wide, yet did not have several kings at once, but only one king in each age, and that each king was succeeded by one of his sons. The first of those kings may have been Cain himself; the second, his son Enoch, in whose name the city where he reigned was founded; the third, Gaidad, whom Enoch begat; the fourth Mevia, whom Gaidad begat; the fifth, Mathusael, whom Mevia begat; and the sixth Lamech, whom Mathusael begat, the seventh in descent from Adam through Cain. But it would not follow that fathers were succeeded in the kingship by their first-born sons. Rather, the successor may have been chosen for qualities useful to an earthly city, by virtue of which he deserved to rule, or by some kind of lot; or the succession may have fallen to a son whom his father loved more than the rest, who thus acquired a kind of hereditary right to rule.

Thus, the Flood may have occurred when Lamech was still alive and ruling, and so the Flood may have found him there to be destroyed along with all other men, apart from those who were in the Ark. Moreover, it is not to be wondered at that these two lines of descent do not show an equal number of generations, if we take into account variations in the length of lives during the many years between the time of Adam and the Flood. The line of Cain had seven generations, and that of Seth ten; for, as I have said already, Lamech was the seventh from Adam, while Noah was the tenth. And the reason why Lamech has several sons recorded, instead of only one, as in the case of all those before him, is that it was uncertain which of them would have succeeded him on his death, if there had remained time for another reign between him and the Flood.

But regardless of whether the order of the generations of Cain is traced through first-born sons or through the kings, it does not seem to me right to pass over in silence the fact that, when Lamech had been found to be the seventh from Adam, enough of his children were then listed to make the number up to eleven, which signifies sin; for three sons and one daughter are added. (His wives may also signify something, but this does not seem to be to our present purpose; for we are here speaking of descent, and Scripture is silent as to the origin of these wives.) For the Law is indicated by the number ten: a fact of which we are reminded by the word 'decatalogue'; and therefore the number eleven, because it goes beyond ten, clearly signifies the transgression of the law, and hence sin. This is why the people of God were told to make eleven curtains of goat's hair for the tabernacle of the testimony, which was a kind of portable temple for them during their wandering.⁹⁹ In the goats' hair there is indeed a reminder of sin, for the goats are to be set on the left hand;¹⁰⁰ and when we confess our sins we prostrate ourselves in shirts of goats' hair, as if we were saying, in the words of the psalm, 'My sin is ever before me.'¹⁰¹

The line of descent, then, from Adam through the wicked Cain ends with the number eleven, which signifies sin. And this number is completed by a woman, because it was by the female sex that the sin by which we all die was initiated. Moreover, what is associated with the commission of sin is fleshly pleasure, which 'lusteth against the spirit'; and Lamech's daughter was called Naamah, which means 'pleasure'. The line of descent from Adam down to Noah through Seth, however, gives us the number of the Law, ten. To this, the three sons of Noah are added; but one of these fell into sin, and two received their father's blessing, so that, with the removal of the reprobate son, and the addition of the sons who were approved, we arrive at the number twelve. This number is the sign of the patriarchs and the apostles, because it is the product of the two parts of seven; for three times four, or four times three, make twelve.

These things being so, I see that we must now consider and discuss how those two posterities, which by their separate lines of descent indicate the two cities, the one of the earth-born, and the

⁹⁹ Exod. 26,7.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Matt. 25,33.

¹⁰¹ Psalm 51,3.

other of the reborn, became afterwards so mingled and mixed together that the whole human race, except for eight persons, deserved to perish in the Flood.

21 Why, after the mention of Cain's son, Enoch, the whole line is recorded continuously as far as the Flood, while after the mention of Seth's son Enos, the narrative returns to the creation of man

The first aspect of the matter to be considered, then, is the following. When the generations of Cain are enumerated, the one in whose name the city was founded, that is, Enoch, is mentioned before Cain's other posterity, and we then have a continuous account of the rest down to the end of which I have spoken: namely, the destruction of that race, and the whole of Cain's posterity, in the Flood. In the other line of descent, however, one son of Seth is mentioned, namely, Enos; but the author does not then proceed at once to add the other generations down to the Flood. Rather, he interrupts his account with the following words and says: 'This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He them; male and female created He them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.'¹⁰²

It seems to me that this interpolation occurs here because the writer intended to begin his chronological account again, starting with Adam himself. He did not wish to do this in respect of the earthly city, because he wished to show that God included it in the record but not in the reckoning. But why does he go back to the recapitulation at this point, after the mention of the son of Seth, the man who 'hoped to call on the name of the Lord God', if not because this is a fitting way of presenting the two cities: the one beginning with a murderer and ending with a murderer (for Lamech also confesses to his two wives that he has slain a man),¹⁰³ and the other beginning with a man who hoped to call upon the name of the Lord God? For the supreme task, in this world, of the pilgrim City of God, its whole task during this mortal life, is to call

¹⁰² Gen. 5,1f

¹⁰³ Gen. 4,23.

upon God; and this fact is commended to us in the person of the one man who was certainly 'the son of the resurrection' of Abel, who was slain. In this one man, indeed, is signified the unity of the whole Supernal City: a unity which is not yet completed, but whose completion in time to come is prefigured by this prophetic foreshadowing.

Let the son of Cain, therefore – that is, of 'possession'; and what does this mean if not 'earthly possession'? – have the name of the earthly city, for it was founded in his name. For it is of such as he that the psalmist sings: 'They call their lands after their own names.'¹⁰⁴ And so that follows which is written in another psalm, 'Thou, O Lord, in Thy city shalt bring their image to nothing.'¹⁰⁵ As for the son of Seth, that is, 'the son of resurrection', let him hope to call upon the name of the Lord God. He, indeed, prefigures that society of men which says, 'I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.'¹⁰⁶ But let him not seek the vain glory of a famous name on earth; for 'Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.'¹⁰⁷

Here, then, are the two cities presented, the one trusting in the things of this world, and the other in the hope of God. They issue forth, as it were, from the common gate of mortality opened in Adam, so that they may go forward and onward towards their own different and proper ends. Then begins the chronological account, in which, after a recapitulation from Adam, other generations are added; and from this condemned beginning, God makes, as if out of a single lump consigned to merited damnation, both 'vessels of wrath fitted to destruction' and also 'vessels of mercy prepared unto glory'. To the former, He gives their due punishment; to the latter He gives His unmerited grace. And He does this so that the Supernal City, which is a pilgrim on earth, may learn, through this very comparison with the vessels of wrath, that it should not trust the freedom of its own will, but should 'hope to call upon the name of the Lord God'. For the will which is present in man's nature can fall away from good to do evil; and it does this through its own free

¹⁰⁴ Psalm 49, 11.

¹⁰⁵ Psalm 73, 20.

¹⁰⁶ Psalm 52, 8.

¹⁰⁷ Psalm 40, 4.

choice. This is because, though that nature was created good by the good God, it was made mutable by Him Who is immutable, because created from nothing. It can also turn away from evil to do good; but it cannot do this without divine aid.

22 Of the fall of the sons of God who were captivated by the daughters of men, so that all, apart from eight persons, deservedly perished in the Flood

As the human race progressed and increased, then, it was this free choice of the will that brought about the mingling of the two cities; for they came to be sharers in iniquity, and thus, in a certain sense, the two were mixed together. This evil is again found to be due to the female sex. Not, however, in the same way as the evil at the beginning of the world; for these women were not seduced by falsehood into persuading men to sin. Rather, women who had been depraved in morals in the earthly city – that is, in the society of the earth-born – were loved for the beauty of their bodies by the sons of God, that is, by the citizens of the other City, which is a pilgrim in this world.¹⁰⁸ Such beauty is certainly a good, a gift from God; but He grants it to the evil also, lest it should come to seem too great a good to the good.

Hence, by forsaking a greater good belonging only to the good, men fell towards the least of goods: a good which does not belong only to the good, but which is shared by good and evil alike. And so the sons of God were captivated by love for the daughters of men, and in order to enjoy them as wives, they forsook the godliness which they had preserved in their holy fellowship and fell into the ways of the society of the earth-born. For bodily beauty is indeed created by God; but it is a temporal and carnal, and therefore a lower, good; and if it is loved more than God is, Who is the eternal, inward and everlasting Good, that love is as wrong as the miser's when he forsakes justice out of his love for gold. The fault here, though, lies not with the gold, but with the man; and this is true of every created thing: though it is good, it can be loved well or ill; well when the proper order is observed, and ill when that order is disturbed. This is how I put it in some brief verses in praise of the

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Gen. 6,2.

candle: 'These are Thy gifts: they are good, for Thou Who art good hast created them. Nothing in them is from us, apart from the sin which arises when we neglect right order, and love that which Thou hast made instead of Thee.'¹⁰⁹

But if the Creator is truly loved – that is, if He Himself is loved, and not something else in place of Him – then He cannot be wrongly loved. We must, however, observe right order even in our love for the very love by which we love that which is worthy to be loved, so that there may be in us that virtue which enables us to live well. Hence, it seems to me that a brief and true definition of virtue is 'rightly ordered love'. That is why, in the holy Song of Songs, Christ's bride, the City of God, sings, 'Set charity in order in me.'¹¹⁰

Thus, it was because the order of charity – that is, of delight and love – was disturbed that the sons of God neglected God out of love for the daughters of men. These two names are enough to show the difference between the two cities. It is not that the 'sons of God' were not sons of men by nature; but they began to have another name by grace. Indeed, in the same verse of Scripture where the sons of God are said to have loved the daughters of men, they are also called 'angels of God'.¹¹¹ Hence, many have supposed that they were not men but angels.

23 Whether we are to believe that angels, who are of a spiritual substance, loved the beauty of women and sought them in marriage, and that giants were born from their union

In the third book of this work, we raised, in passing, the question of whether angels, being spirits, could have bodily intercourse with women; and we there left this question unresolved.¹¹² For it is written, 'He maketh spirits His angels':¹¹³ that is, those who are by

¹⁰⁹ Presumably he means the Paschal candle, although the Latin text is somewhat obscure here. The poem of which these are first three lines is called *De anima* (see *Anthologia Latina*, ed. F. Buecheler *et al.* (Leipzig, reprint 1964), 1,2,43).

¹¹⁰ Song of Songs, 2,4 (I.XX).

¹¹¹ Gen. 6,2.

¹¹² Bk III,5.

¹¹³ Psalm 104,4.

nature spirits He makes into His angels, by imposing upon them the duty of carrying messages. For the Greek word *angelos*, which becomes *angelus* in its Latin form, means 'messenger' in the Latin language. But when, in what follows, the Scripture goes on to say, 'and He maketh a flaming fire His ministers', it is not certain whether it is here referring to their bodies, or whether this means that His ministers ought to burn with charity as with a spiritual fire.

Nevertheless, the same most trustworthy Scripture attests that angels have appeared to men in bodies of such a kind that they could be not only seen, but also touched.¹¹⁴ Again, it is widely reported that the gods of the woodland and fields who are commonly called *incubi* have often behaved disgracefully towards women, lusting after them and contriving to lie with them; and this has been confirmed by many people, either from their own experience or from accounts of the experience of others whose good faith there is no reason to doubt. Again, there are certain demons, whom the Gauls call *dusi*, who constantly attempt and achieve this impure feat; and so many persons of good character have asserted this that it would seem an impertinence to deny it. Hence, I would not venture to say anything definite as to the question of whether some spirits with bodies of air – an element which even when agitated by a fan is felt by the bodily sense of touch – can also experience this lust, and so have intercourse, in whatever way they can, with women, who feel them do so.

I cannot, however, in any way believe that God's holy angels could have committed so great a fault at that time, or that it is of them that the apostle Peter speaks when he says, 'For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment'.¹¹⁵ Rather, he is speaking of those who rebelled against God in the beginning, and fell with the devil, their prince, who through envy dispossessed the first man by the deceit of the serpent. For the Holy Scriptures attest in a great many places that men of God were often called 'angels'. For example, it is written of John, 'I send my messenger [*angelus*] before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before

¹¹⁴ Cf. e.g. Gen. 19,1ff; Judg. 6,12ff.

¹¹⁵ 1 Pet. 2,4.

thee."¹¹⁶ Again, the prophet Malachi is called an 'angel' by reason of a particular grace, that is, a grace particularly imparted to him.¹¹⁷

But some are troubled by the fact that the offspring of those who are called 'sons of God' and the women they loved were not like men of our own kind; for we read that they were giants. Even in our own times, however, as I have mentioned above, men have been born whose bodies far exceed our ordinary stature. A few years ago, in Rome, as the destruction of the city by the Goths was drawing nigh, was there not a woman, living with her father and mother, who stood so much taller in body than all the other inhabitants as to be indeed gigantic? A wondrous crowd rushed to see her wherever she went; and what amazed them most of all was the fact that neither of her parents was even as tall as the tallest men that we normally see.

It may be, therefore, that giants were born even before the sons of God, who are also called angels of God, had intercourse with the daughters of men; that is, with the daughters of those who live according to man: in other words, the sons of Seth with the daughters of Cain. Indeed, this is what the canonical Scripture says, in the book where we read of these things, in the following words:

And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the angels of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they begot children to themselves, the same became the giants which were of old, men of renown.¹¹⁸

These words of the Divine Book are enough to indicate that there were giants on earth in those days, when the sons of God took as their wives the daughters of men, whom they loved because they were 'fair', that is, beautiful. For it is the custom of Scripture to

¹¹⁶ Mark 1,2.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Mal. 2,7.

¹¹⁸ Gen. 6,1ff.

use the word 'fair' to indicate bodily handsomeness also. But giants were also born after this happened; for Scripture says, 'There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men.' Therefore, there were giants both before that time and after it.

Scripture then says, 'And they begot children to themselves'; and this is enough to show that, at first, before the sons of God fell as they did, they begot children to God, not to themselves: because, that is, the lust for intercourse was not their master, but a servant. It was a servant appointed to the task of producing not a proud family, but citizens for the City of God, to whom they, as angels of God, could announce that hope is to be placed in God, like the son of Seth, the 'son of resurrection', who 'hoped to call upon the name of the Lord God'. And in virtue of this hope they, with their posterity, would be co-heirs of eternal goods, and the brothers of their sons under God the Father.

Beyond doubt, however, it is not true, as some suppose, that these sons of God were angels of God in such a way that they were not also men; and Scripture itself declares this without ambiguity. For having first said that 'the angels of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose', it shortly afterwards adds, 'And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh.' It was indeed through God's spirit that they were made angels of God and sons of God; but in falling away to lower things they are called 'men', a name denoting their nature, not God's grace. They are also called 'flesh', because they forsook the spirit and, in forsaking it, were themselves forsaken.

In the Septuagint also they are certainly called both 'angels of God' and 'sons of God'; though not all the texts have this reading, for some of them have only 'sons of God'. But Aquila, whose translation the Jews place before all others, gives neither 'angels of God' nor 'sons of God', but 'sons of gods'. Both renderings, however, are correct. For they were sons of God, under Whose fatherhood they were also the brothers of their own fathers; and they were the sons of gods, because they were begotten of gods, and, together with them, they were themselves gods, according to what is said in the psalm: 'I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of

the most High.¹¹⁹ We are right in believing that the translators of the Septuagint had received the spirit of prophecy; and so if, with its authority, they altered anything and used expressions in their translation different from those of the original, we should not doubt that these expressions also were divinely inspired (although it is said that the expression used is ambiguous in the Hebrew, and can be interpreted as either 'sons of God' or 'sons of gods').

We may, however, leave aside the stories contained in those Scriptures which are called 'Apocrypha' because their origin is hidden and was not clear to the fathers from whom the authority of the true Scriptures has come down to by a most certain and known succession. There is, indeed, some truth to be found in these apocryphal Scriptures; but they have no canonical authority because of the many untruths which they contain. We cannot, of course, deny that Enoch, the seventh in descent from Adam, wrote a number of things by divine inspiration, since the apostle Jude says so in a canonical epistle.¹²⁰ But it was not for nothing that even these were excluded from the canon of the Scriptures which was preserved in the temple of the Hebrew people by the diligence of the priestly succession. For the accuracy of these books was judged to be suspect by reason of their antiquity; and it was not possible to discover whether they were indeed what Enoch had written, for those who put them forward were not thought to have preserved them with due rigour through a clear succession. Hence, prudent men have rightly decided that we should not believe Enoch to be the author of the works attributed to him, containing tales of giants who did not have human fathers. In the same way, many other works have been put forward by heretics under the names of other prophets, and, more recently, under the names of apostles. But all these have been excluded from canonical authority after diligent examination, and are called Apocrypha.

According to the canonical Scriptures, then, both Hebrew and Christian, there is no doubt that there were many giants before the Flood, and that these were citizens of the earth-born society of men, whereas the sons of God, who were of the lineage of Seth according to the flesh, fell down into this society when they forsook righteous-

¹¹⁹ Psalm 82,6.

¹²⁰ Jude 14.

ness. Nor is it any wonder that the sons of God could themselves produce giants; for, though not all of their children were giants, there were certainly more giants then than at any other time since the Flood. It pleased the Creator to create these in order to show once more that a wise man should not attach great importance either to beauty or to the size and strength of the body; for the wise man is blessed with far better and more certain goods than these: with spiritual and immortal goods, which are not the common property of good men and bad alike, but which belong only to the good. And we are reminded of this fact by another prophet when he says, 'There were the giants famous from the beginning, that were of so great a stature, and so expert in war. Those did not the Lord choose, neither gave He the way of knowledge unto them: But they were destroyed, because they had no wisdom, and perished through their own foolishness.'¹²¹

24 How we are to understand what the Lord said to those who were to perish in the Flood, that, 'his days shall be an hundred and twenty years'

God then said, 'His days shall be an hundred and twenty years'.¹²² But this is not to be taken as foretelling that the life of man would not thereafter exceed 120 years; for we find that men lived for more than five hundred years after the Flood as well as before it. Rather, it must be understood that God said this when Noah was about five hundred years old – that is, when he was in the 480th year of his life, which is called the five hundredth year in Scripture, according to the practice of using round numbers to signify a total only slightly less. For the Flood occurred in the second month of the six hundredth year of Noah's life. And so the prediction meant that men who were to perish in the Flood would live for another 120 years, at the end of which time they would be destroyed by the Flood.

Not without reason do we believe that, when the Flood occurred, no one was any longer to be found on earth who did not deserve to die the kind of death which is a fit punishment for the wicked

¹²¹ Baruch 3,26ff.

¹²² Gen. 6,3.

(although such a death could not affect good men, who are in any case to die one day, in any way that could harm them after death). Nonetheless, none of those whom Sacred Scripture mentions as being of the seed of Seth perished in the Flood. But the divine history narrates the cause of the Flood as follows:

And God saw that the wickedness of man was very great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.¹²³

25 Of the anger of God, which does not disturb His mind or trouble His immutable tranquillity

But God's anger is not a disturbance of His mind; rather, it is a judgment according to which punishment is visited upon sin. And when He considers and reconsiders, this is only the application of His immutable plan to mutable things: God does not 'repent' of any act as man does, and His decision as to anything whatsoever is as fixed as His foreknowledge of it is certain. But if Scripture did not use such terms, it would not communicate its meaning so clearly to all the race of men for whom it has care. If it did not first bend down and, as it were, descend to the level of the fallen, it would not terrify the proud, arouse the negligent, exercise the inquirer and nourish the intelligent. Again, when it proclaims the destruction of all creatures on earth and in the air, it is showing us the greatness of the coming calamity; but it is not threatening the destruction of creatures devoid of reason as if they also had sinned.

26 That the Ark which Noah was commanded to make is in every respect a symbol of Christ and the Church

We come now to Noah, who was a just man, and, as the Scriptures truly say, 'perfect in his generations'.¹²⁴ He was not, indeed, perfect

¹²³ Gen. 6,5ff.

¹²⁴ Gen. 6,9.

as the citizens of the City of God will be in that immortal state when they will be equal to the angels of God; but he was as perfect as it is possible for a man to be during this pilgrimage. God commanded Noah to make an Ark, in which he and his family – that is, his wife, his sons and his sons' wives – were to be saved from the devastation of the Flood, together with the animals that went into the Ark in accordance with God's directions. Without doubt this is a symbol of the City of God on pilgrimage in this world: that is, of the Church which is saved through the wood upon which hung 'the Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus'.¹²⁵

Now the dimensions of the Ark, its length, height and breadth, symbolise the human body, in the reality of which Christ was prophesied to come, and did come, to men. For the length of the human body from the top of the head to the sole of the foot is six times its breadth from side to side, and ten times its depth, measured on the side from back to belly. In other words, if you take a man lying on his back or on his face and measure him, his length from head to foot is six times his breadth from right to left or from left to right, and ten times his height from the ground. Thus, the Ark was made 300 cubits in length, and fifty in breadth, and thirty in height. And the door which was set in the side of it clearly represents the wound made in the side of the Crucified when it was pierced with a spear,¹²⁶ which is indeed the way of entrance for those who come to Him, because from that wound there flowed the sacraments in which believers are initiated. Again, when it was commanded that square wood be used, this signifies the stability of the lives of the saints; for in whatever direction you turn that which is square, it will remain stable. And all the other details mentioned in connexion with the building of the Ark are signs of things in the Church.

But it would take too long to pursue all this here. In any case, I have already done so in the work which I wrote against Faustus the Manichaean,¹²⁷ who denied that there are any prophesies of Christ in the Hebrew books. Also, there is perhaps someone who can explain these things more aptly than I or anyone else can. Whatever is said, however, must have as its point of reference the City of God

¹²⁵ 1 Tim. 2,5.

¹²⁶ Cf. John 19,34.

¹²⁷ *Adv. Faust. Man.*, 12,14.

of which we speak: the pilgrim City which dwells in this wicked world as though in a flood; otherwise, the commentator will wander far from the sense intended by the writer of the story of the Flood.

Consider, for example, the following words: 'With lower, second and third stories shalt thou make it.'¹²⁸ It may be that someone will differ from the understanding of these words given in my work against Faustus.¹²⁹ There, I suggested that the Church is said to have two storeys because she is assembled from all the nations, having two classes of men, the circumcised and the uncircumcised, or, as the apostle says in another way, Jews and Greeks;¹³⁰ and that she is said to have three storeys because all the nations were re-established after the Flood from the three sons of Noah. Any other interpretation must, however, be in accordance with the rule of faith. Thus, God wished the Ark to contain dwelling-places not only on the lowest level but also on the next higher level (which He called the second storey), and again on the level above that (which He called the third storey), so that there should be a habitation rising up in three stages from the bottom; and this could be taken to signify the three virtues extolled by the apostle: faith, hope and charity.¹³¹ Again, the three storeys could be even more suitably explained as signifying the three abundant harvests in the Gospel, 'thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and an hundredfold';¹³² in which case married chastity would occupy the bottom storey, widowed chastity the storey above, and virginity the highest storey. It may be, indeed, that still other and better explanations are possible, consistent with the faith of this City. But I would say this of all other interpretations which can be developed in this connexion: that, though different suggestions may be made, they must all be reconciled with the harmony of the Catholic faith.

¹²⁸ Gen. 6,16.

¹²⁹ Cf. *Adv. Faust. Man.*, 12,16.

¹³⁰ Cf. Rom. 1,16; 3,9; Gal. 3,28.

¹³¹ 1 Cor. 13,13.

¹³² Matt. 13,8.

27 Of the Ark and the Flood; and that we cannot agree with those who accept the historical meaning of the story but reject its allegorical meaning, nor with those who accept the symbolic meaning but not the literal

No one, however, should suppose that the story of the Flood is simply without purpose; or that we should seek in it only a true historical account without allegorical significance; or, conversely, that the events recorded in it are entirely unhistorical, and the language merely figurative; or that, whatever else it is, the story is not a prophecy of the Church. For who save one with a perverse mind would contend that books which have been so religiously preserved for thousands of years, and with such concern on the part of their guardians for a well-ordered transmission, were written to no purpose, or that they are to be consulted for the sake of historical facts only? To say nothing of anything else: if it was the large number of animals that compelled Noah to make an Ark of such great magnitude, what compelled him to put into it two of each unclean animal, but seven of each clean kind, when both kinds could have been preserved by the same number? Moreover, although God required them to be preserved in this way in order to renew their species, did He therefore not also have the power to re-create them in the same way as he had first created them?

We come next, then, to those who contend that the story of the Flood is not historical, but consists merely of things symbolic and figurative. First, they maintain that it is not possible for there to be a flood so great that the waters rise to a height of fifteen cubits above the highest mountain tops; for, they say, clouds cannot gather above the summit of Mount Olympus, because that summit is already located so high in the heavens that the denser air in which winds, clouds and rain are formed is absent. But they do not notice that earth, the densest element of all, can exist there; or will they perhaps deny that the summit of the mountain is made of earth? Why, then, do they admit that earth is allowed to rise so high into the realm of heaven, and yet contend that water cannot be allowed so to rise? For those who measure and weigh the elements tell us that water rises higher and weighs less than earth. What reason do our adversaries offer, then, to explain why earth, a heavier and lower

element, should have been invading the more rarefied region of heaven during the revolution of so many years, yet water, a lighter and higher element, was not permitted to do so even for a short time?

They say also that the Ark could not have contained so many animals of both sexes, two of each of the unclean and seven of each of the clean. But it seems to me that our adversaries are here counting only the 300 cubits of length and the fifty of breadth, without noticing that there is the same amount of space on the storey above, and the same amount again on the storey above that, so that, multiplied by three, the dimensions of the Ark come to 900 cubits by 150. Let us also note the suggestion not inappositely made by Origen:¹³³ that Moses, the man of God, was, as it is written, 'learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians',¹³⁴ who loved geometry, and that he therefore may have meant geometrical cubits, one of which is said to be equal to six of ours. Who, then, does not see how many things an Ark of such great capacity might hold?

It is also argued that it would not be possible to assemble an Ark of such magnitude; but this is a falsehood, and a very inept one. For our adversaries know that immense cities have been constructed, and they fail to notice that a hundred years were spent on the building of the Ark. Now if it is possible for stones to adhere to one another when cemented merely by lime, to make an encircling wall many miles in length, why is it not possible for timbers to be joined together by pegs, bolts, nails and bituminous glue, to make an Ark extending to such great length and breadth in straight, not curved, lines? Such an Ark would not require to be launched into the sea by human effort, but would be lifted up by the water when it came, because of the natural difference in weight; and, when afloat, it would be steered by divine providence rather than by human prudence, lest it incur shipwreck anywhere.

Next comes a question often asked by the excessively pedantic, concerning the tiniest of creatures: not only such things as mice and newts, but also locusts, beetles, and even flies and fleas: might these not have been present in the Ark in greater numbers than the total

¹³³ *In Gen. homil.*, 2,2.

¹³⁴ *Acts* 7,22.

specified when God gave the command? First, then, we must remind those who are troubled by this question that the words 'every creeping thing of the earth'¹³⁵ are to be taken to mean that there was no need to preserve in the Ark those creatures able to live in the waters: not only such aquatic creatures as fish, but also those which swim on the surface; many birds, for example. Again, when it is said, 'they shall be male and female',¹³⁶ this is clearly to be understood in terms of the need to renew the species, and so it was not necessary for there to be in the Ark those creatures which can be generated from certain things, or from the corruption of such things, without sexual intercourse. Or, if they were present in the Ark, as they are usually present in houses, they could have been there without the fixing of a definite number. On the other hand, a most sacred mystery was here being enacted; and it may be that so great a truth was being prefigured that it could not be properly conveyed unless all the creatures which were prevented by their nature from living in the waters were present in that fixed number. If so, however, this was not the responsibility of a man or of men, but of God. For Noah did not catch the animals and then put them in; he let them in as they came and entered. And this is why it is said, 'they shall come unto thee':¹³⁷ not, that is, by any act of man, but by the command of God.

We are not, however, to believe that this included those creatures who lack sex; for it was definitely prescribed that 'they shall be male and female'. There are some animals, such as flies, which are generated from certain things without sexual intercourse, but which subsequently reproduce by means of intercourse. There are others, such as bees, in which there are no male and female characteristics.¹³⁸ Again, there are creatures which, though they have sexual organs, do not produce young, such as male and female mules; and it would be a wonder if these last were included in the Ark. Instead, it would suffice to have their parents there, that is, the species of horse and ass. And so too with any other animals which produce some different kind of creature by a mingling of different species.

¹³⁵ Gen. 6,20.

¹³⁶ Gen. 6,19.

¹³⁷ Gen. 6,20.

¹³⁸ Cf. Augustine, *De mor. Man.*, 63; *Adv. Faust. Man.*, 8

But if such creatures had anything to contribute to the symbolic meaning of the Ark, then they were included, for such a species also has male and female.

Not a few people are troubled as to the kinds of food which those animals which are thought to eat nothing but flesh could have had in the Ark. They wonder whether animals in excess of the prescribed number were taken on board, without transgressing the command, since their inclusion would have been compelled by the need to feed the others; or whether (and this is the more readily believable explanation) there could have been some form of nourishment apart from flesh which would have been suitable for all the animals. For we know that many animals whose food is flesh also eat vegetables and fruit, especially figs and chestnuts. Would it have been any wonder, therefore, if so wise and righteous man as Noah, divinely instructed as to the food appropriate for every animal, had prepared and established a stock of meatless food suitable to each kind?

What is there that we would not eat if compelled by hunger? Again, what is there that God could not make pleasant and wholesome? The divine power could, indeed, easily have endowed these animals with the ability to live without food at all, were it not for the fact that their eating had its part to play in completing the allegorical representation of so great a mystery. For only a love of contention would allow anyone to suppose that the many signs contained in the historical story of the Flood do not prefigure the Church. For the nations have already filled the Church, and clean and unclean alike are, as it were, contained in the hull of the Church's unity, until the appointed end is reached. The meaning in this regard is so manifestly clear that we cannot lawfully doubt that the other aspects of the story have their own meanings, even though the language is somewhat more obscure and difficult to understand.

This being so, then, no one, no matter how stubborn, will dare to suppose that the story of the Flood was written without purpose; or that the events there recorded have only historical significance; or that they have no historical, but only a symbolic, meaning; or that their symbolism has nothing to do with the Church. Rather, we are to believe that the writing of this account had a wise purpose; that the events recorded are historical; that they have a symbolic

meaning also, and that that symbolic meaning is intended to prefigure the Church.

Now that this book has reached this point, we must bring it to a close. Next, we must examine the course taken by both cities – that is, by the earthly city, which lives according to man, and the Heavenly City, which lives according to God – after the Flood, and then in the ages following.

Book XVI

1 Whether any families are to be found in the period after the Flood from Noah to Abraham whose members lived according to God

Was the progress of the Holy City continuous from the time of the Flood onwards, or was it so disrupted by ungodliness that, at times, not one man existed who was a worshipper of the one true God? It is difficult to find in Scripture any clear statement as to this question. But, from the time of Noah, who, with his wife and three sons and their wives, was found worthy to be saved in the Ark from the devastation of the Flood, we do not find, until the time of Abraham, anyone in the canonical books whose godliness is proclaimed by the divine eloquence. The exception to this is when Noah commended his sons Shem and Japheth in his prophetic blessing; for he knew and foresaw what was to happen far in the future. Hence it was also that he cursed his middle son – that is, the one younger than the first-born but older than the last – who had sinned against his father. Noah did not curse Ham in his own person, but in the person of his son, in these words: ‘Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.’¹ Now Canaan was the son of Ham, who did not cover his sleeping father, but, rather, drew attention to his nakedness. And this also is why Noah went on to add a blessing to his other two sons, the eldest and the youngest, saying: ‘Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the houses of Shem.’² In the same way, the vineyard which Noah planted, the drunkenness which came from its fruit, Noah’s nakedness while asleep, and all the other things written in this story, are full of prophetic meaning and covered with prophetic veils.³

2 What is prophetically prefigured in Noah’s sons

But now that all these things have come to pass in the posterity of those sons, what was once veiled has now been sufficiently revealed.

¹ Gen. 9,25.

² Gen. 9,27.

³ Cf. Augustine, *De doct. Christ.*, 3,21,45; *Adv. Faust. Man.*, 12,23f.

For who can doubt, if he considers the matter diligently and intelligently, that these things have been fulfilled in Christ? The name Shem, of whose seed Christ was born in the flesh, means 'named'; and what name is more glorious than that of Christ, the fragrance of Whose name is now everywhere: so much so that, in the Song of Songs, it is compared, with prophetic foresight, with the pouring forth of ointment.⁴ The name Japheth means 'broadness'; and does not the broadness of the nations dwell in the houses of Christ, that is, in the churches? Again, the name Ham means 'hot'; and Noah's middle son, separating himself, as it were, from the other two, and remaining between them, is included neither in the first fruits of Israel nor in the fullness of the Gentiles; for what does he signify if not the 'hot' race of the heretics, who burn not with the spirit of wisdom, but with impatience? For it is with impatience that the breasts of the heretics are wont to glow; and it is for this reason that they disturb the peace of the saints. Even in this respect, however, they assist the progress of the faithful, according to what the apostle says: 'For there must also be heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.'⁵ Again, it is written: 'The well-instructed son will be wise, and he will use the fool as his servant.'⁶ For many things of importance to the Catholic faith are stirred up by the heat of the heretics' restlessness, and, because it is necessary to defend them against attack, they are therefore examined all the more diligently, understood all the more clearly, and proclaimed all the more imperatively. Thus, a question raised by an adversary becomes an opportunity for instruction. Nevertheless, it is not absurd to see Noah's middle son as symbolising not only those who are openly separated from the Church, but also those who glory in the name of Christian and yet live profligate lives. For such people proclaim Christ's passion, prefigured by Noah's nakedness, in what they profess, but they dishonour it by their evil deeds. It is of such as these, therefore, that it is said, 'By their fruits ye shall know them.'⁷

It is for this reason that Ham was cursed in the person of his son: in his fruit, as it were; that is, in his works. Hence, it is fitting

⁴ Song of Songs 1,3.

⁵ 1 Cor 11,19.

⁶ Prov 10,4 (LXX).

⁷ Matt. 7,20.

that the son's name, Canaan, should mean 'their motion'; for what else does this mean but 'their works'? Shem and Japheth, on the other hand, represent the circumcision and the uncircumcision, or, in other words, the Jews and the Greeks, as the apostle calls them (although he is referring only to those who are saved and justified). When they somehow learned of their father's nakedness, which symbolised the Saviour's passion, they 'took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and turned their backs, and covered the nakedness of their father';⁸ and they did not look upon that which they reverently covered. Now, when we celebrate Christ's passion, we in a certain sense honour what was done for us by Him, and we turn our backs on the crime of the Jews. The garment signifies the mystery, and the backs signify our memory of things past. For this is indeed now the time when Japheth dwells in the houses of Shem and the wicked brother is in the midst of them,⁹ and the Church celebrates Christ's passion as having come to pass, and no longer looks for it in the future.

The wicked brother, however, in the person of his son – that is, in his works – is the servant, that is, the slave, of the good brothers. And what this means is that the good are to make intentional use of the wicked, to train themselves in patience or to increase their own wisdom. For as the apostle attests, there are those who preach Christ with impure motives; but, he says, 'Whether in pretence, or in truth, let Christ be preached.'¹⁰ Now Christ Himself planted a vineyard, of which the prophet says, 'The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel.'¹¹ 'And he drank of the wine';¹² which wine may be understood as that cup of which Christ speaks when He says 'Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?',¹³ and 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me'¹⁴ – a cup which, without doubt, signifies His passion. Or, since wine is the fruit of the vineyard, we may prefer this meaning: that from the vineyard itself, that is, from the race of the Israelites, came the flesh

⁸ Gen. 9,23.

⁹ I.e. the time when both Gentiles and Jews have come to believe in Christ, but with heretics and wicked men in their midst.

¹⁰ Phil. 1,18.

¹¹ Is. 5,7.

¹² Gen. 9,21.

¹³ Matt. 20,22.

¹⁴ Matt. 26,39.

which He took for us, and the blood, that He might suffer. 'He was drunken' – that is, Christ suffered – 'and he was uncovered', for His weakness was uncovered, that is, was made manifest. As the apostle says, 'He was crucified through weakness.'¹⁵ And that is why he also says, 'the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men'.¹⁶ Moreover, after it has said, 'he was naked', the Scripture adds, 'within his own tent'; and, in this way, it is skilfully shown that Christ was to suffer death on the cross at the hands of a people of His own flesh and blood, of His own family, even the Jews.

The reprobate preach this passion of Christ only outwardly, only by the sound of their voice; for they do not understand what it is that they preach. The righteous, however, have this great mystery in their inner man, and they honour the weakness and foolishness of God inwardly, within their heart, because it is stronger and wiser than men. This is what is prefigured in the fact that Ham went forth and published his father's nakedness outside, whereas Shem and Japheth came in to cover it, that is, to honour it: theirs was the more inward action.

We seek out these secrets of the Divine Scriptures as best we can, sometimes with more success and sometimes with less, but always holding faithfully to the certain belief that these events and the written record of them invariably prefigure things to come in some way, and are always to be referred to Christ and His Church, which is the City of God. These have never ceased to be prophesied from the very beginning of the human race, and we now see such prophecies being fulfilled in all things.

Thus, after two of Noah's sons had been blessed and the middle one cursed, the record is silent for a period of more than a thousand years, down to Abraham, as to any righteous men who piously worshipped God. I do not believe that such men did not exist. If they were all mentioned, however, the record would be exceedingly long, and would exhibit more historical accuracy than prophetic foresight. The writer of these Sacred Scriptures, therefore – or, rather, the Spirit of God acting through him – is concerned only with those events which both compose an account of the past and also foretell

¹⁵ 2 Cor. 13,4.

¹⁶ 1 Cor. 1,25.

the future, and only with those which pertain to the City of God. For whatever is said here of those men who are not citizens of that City is said to this end: that the City of God should profit or be conspicuous by comparison with its opposite. We must not, of course, attribute a symbolic significance to all the events recorded in the narrative; but those which do not symbolise anything are included in the text for the sake of those which do have such significance. For it is only the blade of the plough which cuts through the earth; but the other parts of the plough are necessary to make this possible. Only the strings of the lyre, and of other musical instruments of that kind, are able to make music; but other components are included in the construction of the instruments in order to bring this about: components which are not struck by the performer, but to which the parts which resonate when struck are connected. So too, some things are said in the prophetic history which have no symbolic significance of their own, but to which those things which do have such significance are attached and, so to speak, made fast.

3 Of the generations of the three sons of Noah

Next, then, we must consider the generations of the sons of Noah, and we must incorporate what it seems must be said of these into the text of this work, in which the unfolding in time of the two cities, the earthly and the heavenly, is shown.

The record begins with the youngest son, called Japheth. His eight sons are named, together with seven grandsons from two of his sons – three from one and four from another – making fifteen all told. Then come the four sons of Ham, who was Noah's middle son, with five grandsons from one of his sons, and two great-grandsons from one of the grandsons, giving a total of eleven. After these have been enumerated, we are, as it were, taken back to the beginning, and it is said:

And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a giant in the earth. He was a mighty hunter against the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter against the Lord. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babylon, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and

Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah: the same is a great city.¹⁷

Now this Cush, father of the giant Nimrod, was the first named of the sons of Ham; but five sons and two grandsons of Cush had been enumerated already. Either, then, he begat this giant after the birth of his grandsons, or – which is more believable – Scripture makes separate mention of Nimrod because of his prominence. For it is recorded, indeed, that the beginning of his kingdom was the most illustrious city of Babylon; and the adjoining cities or territories are recorded also. But when it is said that Asshur went forth out of that land – the land of Shinar, which belonged to the kingdom of Nimrod – and founded Nineveh and the other cities which he attached to it: these things, in fact, happened much later. The writer took occasion to mention them here because of the splendour of the kingdom of the Assyrians, which was wondrously extended under Ninus, son of Belus, the founder of the great city of Nineveh, the name of which was derived from his name: that is, Nineveh was named after Ninus. Asshur, on the other hand, from whom sprang the Assyrians, was not one of the sons of Ham, Noah's middle son; he is found among the sons of Shem, Noah's eldest son. Hence it is, apparently, that it was men sprung from the progeny of Shem who later obtained lordship over the kingdom of that giant, and who proceeded thence to found other cities, the first of which was called Nineveh, after Ninus.

The account then reverts to Ham's second son, who was called Mizraim; and the offspring of Mizraim are given not as individual men, but as seven nations. And from the sixth nation – from the sixth son, as it were – it is recorded that the nation called Philistines arose, thus making eight. Then we return to Canaan, the son in whose person Ham was cursed, and eleven of his offspring are named. Next, the extent of their territory is mentioned, and some of their cities are given. Thus, when sons and grandsons are counted up, the progeny of Ham comes to thirty-one.

It remains to record the sons of Shem, Noah's eldest son; indeed, the account of these generations has arrived at him by degrees, beginning with the youngest son. There is, however, a certain obscurity in the passage where the record of the sons of Shem

¹⁷ Gen. 10,8ff.

begins, and we must elucidate this by giving an explanation of it, since it is very pertinent to the subject of our enquiry. The passage reads, 'Unto Shem also, even unto Shem himself, the father of all his sons, Heber was born, the son of the elder brother of Japheth.'¹⁸ The proper order of the words is as follows: 'Unto Shem also was born Heber, even unto himself – that is, unto Shem himself was born Heber – and this Shem is the father of all his sons.' The author therefore wished it to be clearly understood that Shem is the patriarch of all who have sprung from his stock, who are therefore to be included in his account whether they are his sons, grandsons or great grandsons, or his still more remote offspring. For Shem himself certainly did not beget Heber: he is found among the ancestors of Heber, but in the fifth generation before him. For Shem begat Arphaxad, among other sons; Arphaxad begat Cainan; Cainan begat Salah; and Salah begat Heber.

It is not without reason, however, that Heber is named as the foremost of all the descendants of Shem, and is given precedence over Shem's sons even though he belongs to the fifth generation. For it is true that, as we are taught, the Hebrews were named after him: that they were, so to speak, 'Heberews'. There is, indeed, another possible opinion: that they seem to be named after Abraham, and are thus called 'Abrahews', as it were. But it is, in fact, undoubtedly true that they were named 'Heberews', after Heber, and later, with the omission of one letter, Hebrews. The Hebrew language exists only among the people of Israel; and it is in that people, and in the saints, and, in a shadowy and mysterious sense, in all mankind, that the pilgrim City of God is embodied.

First, then, the six sons of Shem are named; then, from one of them, four grandsons were born; another of the sons of Shem also begat a grandson for him, and to this grandson was born a great-grandson, and to him in turn a great-great-grandson, who was Heber. Heber then begat two sons, one of whom he called Peleg, which means 'divider'; and Scripture here subjoins an explanation of why he was given this name: 'For in his days', it says, 'was the earth divided'.¹⁹ What this means will appear presently. Another of the sons born to Heber begat twelve sons of his own; and this makes

¹⁸ Gen. 10,21.

¹⁹ Gen. 10,25.

up all the progeny of Shem to twenty-seven. Thus, all the offspring of the three sons of Noah amount to seventy-three: that is, fifteen from Japheth, thirty-one from Ham, and twenty-seven from Shem. Scripture then goes on to say, 'These are the sons of Shem, after their families, after their tongues, in their lands, after their nations.'²⁰ Then, similarly, of all the sons of Noah it says: 'These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood.'²¹ From this, we gather that there were seventy-three nations at that time (or, rather, as will be shown later, seventy-two), not seventy-three men. And the account of the sons of Japheth, given earlier, also concludes thus: 'By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations.'²²

As I have shown above, the nations had already been recorded more clearly in the passage dealing with the sons of Ham: 'Mizraim begat those who are called Ludim',²³ and so on in the same fashion until seven nations are listed. Having enumerated all these, the account then concludes: 'These are the sons of Ham, after their families, after their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations.' No sons are recorded for many of these sons, however; and this is because, when they were born, they became members of existing nations, and did not found new nations of their own. What other reason could there be for the fact that, whereas eight sons of Japheth are enumerated, only two of them are mentioned as having had sons of their own? Again, four sons of Ham are named, but the sons of only three of them are added to the account; and six sons of Shem are named, but the offspring of only two of these are included. Can it be, then, that the others remained without sons? God forbid that we should believe this! Rather, their sons are not considered worthy of mention because they did not found nations of their own; when they were born, they were added to the nations which had already been founded by others.

²⁰ Gen. 10,20.

²¹ Gen. 10,32.

²² Gen. 10,5.

²³ Gen. 10,13.

4 Of the diversity of languages and the beginning of Babylon

Each of those nations is said to have possessed its own language; but the narrator nonetheless goes back to the time when all men had the same language; and he then explains how it came about that the present diversity of languages arose. 'And the whole earth', he says,

was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said to one another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime they had for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Confusion; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.²⁴

This city which was called 'Confusion' is Babylon itself, whose wondrous construction is mentioned by historians of all nations. The name 'Babylon' indeed means 'confusion'. Hence it may be inferred that the giant Nimrod was its founder, as was briefly suggested above. For when the Scripture mentions him, it says that 'the beginning of his kingdom was Babylon': that is, Babylon was the city which took precedence over all others, where the king had his dwelling, as in a capital city; although it was not brought to the perfection which, in their proud ungodliness, its builders had intended. For they had proposed to build to a height so great that

²⁴ Gen. 11,1ff.

it would, as they said, 'reach unto heaven'; although we do not know whether this referred to a single tower, intended to be the principal structure among others, or to all the towers, signified by a singular noun in the same way that 'the soldier' is used to mean thousands of soldiers, and 'the frog' and 'the locust' to denote a multitude of frogs and locusts, as in the plagues with which Moses smote the Egyptians.

But what could vain human presumption have accomplished, no matter how vast the building, and no matter how far into the heavens it reached in its affront to God – even if it rose above the mountains themselves, and escaped beyond the region of this cloudy air? What harm, in short, can man do to God by any act of spiritual or corporeal pride whatsoever? The safe and true way to heaven is built by humility, which lifts the heart up to the Lord, not against the Lord, as is said of that giant who is called 'a mighty hunter against the Lord'. Not a few translators have failed to understand this, being misled by an ambiguity in the Greek, and so have rendered it as 'before the Lord' rather than 'against the Lord'. Indeed, the Greek word *enantion* does mean both 'before' and 'against'. It occurs in the former sense in the psalm: 'Let us kneel before the Lord our maker';²⁵ and it occurs in the latter sense in the Book of Job, where it is written, 'Thou hast turned thy spirit against God.'²⁶ But it is in the latter sense that we are to understand it in the description of the giant Nimrod, who was 'a mighty hunter against the Lord'. For what does this word mean, what is a 'hunter', if not a deceiver, an oppressor, a slayer of earth-born creatures? Thus he, with his peoples, began to build a tower against the Lord: a tower which symbolises his ungodly pride. Now it is right that a wicked intention should be punished, even when it is not successfully carried out. What kind of punishment was imposed, then? Because the power of a ruler lies in his tongue, it was there that Nimrod's pride was condemned, so that he who refused to understand and obey God's bidding was himself not understood when he gave his bidding to men. Thus that conspiracy of his was dissolved, since each man withdrew from anyone whom he did not understand, and associated only with those to whom he could speak. And

²⁵ Psalm 95,6.

²⁶ Job 15,13.

so the nations were divided by their tongues, and scattered abroad upon the face of all the earth, as it pleased God. And God accomplished this in ways which are hidden from us, and which we cannot understand.

5 Of the Lord's descent to confuse the language of those who were building the tower

Now it is written that 'The Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded': not, that is, the children of God, but that society which lives according to man, which we call the earthly city. God does not, of course, move from place to place, for He is always present everywhere; but He is said to 'come down' when He performs an action on earth which is miraculous because beyond the ordinary course of nature, and, by so doing, in a certain sense reveals His presence. Again, He can never be ignorant of anything; and so He does not learn anything by seeing it at a particular time. But He is said to see and to discover at a particular time anything which He causes to be seen and discovered. Thus, the city had not previously been seen in the way that God caused it to be seen when He showed how greatly it had displeased Him. Alternatively, God can be understood as coming down to the city because His angels came down, in whom He dwells. Thus, when it is added, 'And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language', and so on; and when it is added again, 'Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language': these words form a recapitulation, demonstrating how the action described by 'the Lord came down' was done. For if He had already come down, why would He wish to say 'Go to, let us go down', which is taken as said to the angels, unless because He was present in the angels when they came down, and thus came down Himself, through them? And it is fitting that He does not say, 'Go down and confound their language' but 'let us go down and confound their language'; for, in this way, He shows that He works through His ministers, so that they themselves are also God's fellow-workers. As the apostle says, 'For we are labourers together with God.'²⁷

²⁷ 1 Cor. 3,9.

6 How we are to understand the kind of speech with which God spoke to the angels

Again, the words spoken when man was made might be taken as referring to the angels. For God said, 'Let us make man';²⁸ He did not say 'Let me make man.' This, however, is followed by 'in our image'; and since it would be blasphemous to believe that man was made in the image of the angels, or that the angels and God have the same image, the plural here is rightly understood as referring to the Trinity. Nevertheless, the Trinity is one God; and so, even when it has said 'Let us make', the Scripture then goes on to say: 'And God made man in the image of God.' It does not say, 'The gods made' or, 'in the image of the gods'.

If there had been anything to prohibit us from understanding it as referring to the angels, the passage which we are here considering might itself have been taken to refer to the Trinity, as if the Father had said to the Son and the Holy Spirit, 'Come, let us go down, and there confound their language.' But it is more fitting that the angels should 'come' to God with holy movements: that is, with the pious thoughts with which they consult the immutable Truth which reigns as the eternal Law of that supernal court of theirs. For they themselves are not the truth for themselves; they are partakers of the creative Truth, and move towards it, as towards the fountain of life,²⁹ to receive from it what they do not possess of themselves. And this movement of theirs is a steadfast movement, by which they approach without drawing back.

But God does not speak to the angels in the way that we speak to each other, or to God, or to the angels, or as the angels speak to us, or as God speaks to us through them. Rather, He speaks in His own ineffable way. His speech is explained to us in our fashion; but God's speech is indeed more sublime than ours. It precedes His action as the immutable reason of the action itself, and it has no audible and transient sound, but it has a power which endures for eternity and operates in time. It is in this way that He speaks to the holy angels, whereas He speaks to us, who are situated far away from Him, in a different way. And yet, when we also grasp something of this kind of speech with our inward ears, we ourselves

²⁸ Gen. 1,26.

²⁹ Cf. Psalm 36,9

come close to the angels. There is no need in this work, then, for me to give repeated explanations of God's 'speaking'. For the immutable Truth either speaks by itself, ineffably, to the minds of rational creatures, or it speaks through a mutable creature: either to our spirit by spiritual images, or to our corporeal sense by corporeal voices.

Certainly, when it is said, 'And now nothing will be restrained from them [*Et nunc non deficient ex illis omnia*], which they have imagined to do', this is said not as an assertion, but as a question, in the way that we often employ when we express a threat, as when a certain author says, 'Shall they not take up arms and come from all over the city to pursue him?'³⁰ The passage must therefore be taken as if God had said, 'And now will not everything be restrained from them [*Et nunc nonne omnia deficient ex illis*], which they have imagined to do?' The quotation in its original form would not of itself have conveyed a threat; and so I have added the particle *-ne* for the benefit of those who are slow of understanding, so that it says *nonne*, since a tone of voice cannot be indicated in writing.³¹

From those three men, then, the sons of Noah, seventy-three nations and as many languages – or, rather, seventy-two, as calculation will show – came into being on the earth, and by their increase filled even the islands. However, the increase of the nations was greater than that of the languages; for even in Africa we know of many barbarous nations which have only one language between them.

7 Whether the islands most remote from land received all kinds of animals from the number preserved in the Ark from the inundation of the Flood

Who doubts that, after the human race had multiplied, men could certainly have crossed over by boat to inhabit the islands? But the question is: What of the beasts of all kinds which are not under the care of men, and which are not, like frogs, born from the earth, but

³⁰ Virgil, *Aen.*, 4, 592.

³¹ This paragraph loses a good deal in translation; but it is not at all convincing even in the original Latin.

produced only by intercourse between male and female, such as wolves and other animals of that kind? How, after the Flood, in which all creatures not in the Ark were obliterated, and if they could only be replenished if their kind was preserved in both sexes in the Ark, could they have come to be on the islands? It is, indeed, possible to believe that they crossed to the islands by swimming. Only to the nearest ones, however; and some islands are so far away from the mainlands that it seems impossible for any beasts to have swum to them. It is not incredible that men may have captured beasts and taken them with them for the purpose of hunting, and in this way established them after their kinds where they dwelt. Again, we should not deny the possibility that they were transported by the activity of angels, either at God's command or with his permission. Or it may be that they sprang from the earth, as at their first origin, when God said, 'Let the earth bring forth the living creature.'³² In this case – if the earth produced many animals on islands to which they could not have crossed – it becomes much more apparent that the animals of all kinds were included in the Ark not so much for the sake of replenishing the animal populations as for that of prefiguring the various nations, and so presenting a symbol of the Church.

8 Whether certain monstrous races of men were produced as descendants of Adam or of the sons of Noah

The histories of the nations tell of certain monstrous races of men.³³ If these tales are to be believed, it may be asked whether such monsters are descended from the sons of Noah, or rather from that one man from whom the sons of Noah themselves have come. Some of these are said to have only one eye, in the middle of their forehead. Others have feet which point backwards, behind their legs. Others combine in themselves the nature of both sexes, having the right breast of a man and the left of a woman, and, when they mate,

³² Gen. 1,24.

³³ Augustine's chief source for this chapter is Pliny, 7,2,10ff; cf. Aulus Gellius, *Noct. Att.*, 9,4,6ff; Herodotus 3,32; 4,13; 4,191; Homer, *Il.*, 3,3ff.

they take it in turns to beget and conceive. Others have no mouths, and live only by breathing through their nostrils. Others again are only a cubit high, and these are called Pygmies by the Greeks, after their word for a cubit, *pygme*. Elsewhere, we come across females who conceive at the age of five and who do not live to be more than eight years old. Again, there is a race whose feet are attached to a single leg which does not bend at the knee, yet they move with marvellous speed. These are called 'Shadow-feet' because in hot weather they lie on their backs on the ground and take shelter in the shade of their feet. There are some men without necks, who have eyes in their shoulders; and other men, or man-like creatures, are depicted in mosaic on the marine parade at Carthage, taken from books as examples of the curious things to be found in natural history. And what am I to say of those dog-headed men whose dogs' heads and actual barking show that they are more beasts than men?

It is not, of course, necessary to believe in all the kinds of men which are said to exist. But anyone who is born anywhere as a man (that is, as a rational and mortal animal), no matter how unusual he may be to our bodily senses in shape, colour, motion, sound, or in any natural power or part or quality, derives from the original and first-created man; and no believer will doubt this. It is, however, clear what constitutes the natural norm in the majority of cases and what, in itself, is a marvellous rarity.

Moreover, the explanation which is given of monstrous human births among us can also be given in the case of some of these monstrous races. For God is the Creator of all things: He Himself knows where and when anything should be, or should have been, created; and He knows how to weave the beauty of the whole out of the similarity and diversity of its parts. The man who cannot view the whole is offended by what he takes to be the deformity of a part; but this is because he does not know how it is adapted or related to the whole. We know of men who were born with more than five fingers or five toes. This is a trivial thing and not any great divergence from the norm. God forbid, however, that someone who does not know why the Creator has done what He has done should be foolish enough to suppose that God has in such cases erred in allotting the number of human fingers. So, then, even if a greater divergence should occur, He Whose work no one may justly condemn knows what He has done.

There is at Hippo Zaritus¹⁴ a man who has crescent-shaped feet with only two toes on each; and his hands are similar. If there were any race with these features, it would be added to our list of the curiosities and wonders of nature. But are we for this reason to deny that this man is descended from that one man who was created in the beginning?

Again, though they are rare, it is difficult to find times when there have been no *androgyni*, also called hermaphrodites: persons who embody the characteristics of both sexes so completely that it is uncertain whether they should be called male or female. However, the prevailing habit of speech has named them according to the superior sex, that is, the male; for no one has ever used the term 'androgyness' or 'hermaphroditess'.

Some years ago, but certainly within my memory, a man was born in the East with a double set of upper members but a single set of lower ones. He had two heads, two chests and four arms, but only one belly and two feet, as if he were one man; and he lived long enough for his fame to draw many people to come and see him.

Again, who could call to mind all the human infants who have been born very unlike those who were most certainly their parents? It cannot be denied, however, that these derive their origin from that one man, Adam; and the same is therefore true of all those races which, by reason of their bodily differences, are said to have deviated from the usual pattern of nature exhibited by most – indeed, by almost the whole – of mankind. If these races are included in the definition of 'human', that is, if they are rational and mortal animals, then it must be admitted that they trace their lineage from that same one man, the first father of all mankind: if, that is, what we are told of the diversity of those races, and their great difference from one another and from us, is true. For if we did not know that monkeys and apes and baboons are not men but beasts, those historians who revel in curiosities might with unpunished vanity delude us into believing that they are kinds of men. If, however, the creatures of which these wondrous things are written are indeed men, why was it God's will to create some races in this way? Perhaps it was so that, when monsters are born of men among

¹⁴ Also called Hippo Diarrhytus; modern Bizerta in Tunis.

us, as they must be, we should not think them the work of an imperfect craftsman: perhaps it was so that we should not suppose that, despite the wisdom with which He fashions the nature of human beings, God has on this occasion erred. In which case, it ought not to seem absurd to us that, just as some monsters occur within the various races of mankind, so there should be certain monstrous races within the human race as a whole.

I shall, then, conclude my discussion of this question with a tentative and cautious answer. Either the written accounts which we have of some of these races are completely worthless; or, if such creatures exist, they are not men; or, if they are men, they are descended from Adam.

9 Whether we are to believe that there are 'antipodes' on the underside of the earth, opposite our own dwelling-place

As for the fabled 'antipodes', that is, men who occupy the other side of the earth, where the sun rises when it sets on us; men who plant their footsteps opposite ours: there is no reason to believe that such men exist.³⁵ Those who affirm that they do, do not do so on the basis of any historical knowledge; rather, they make a conjecture on the strength of the following process of reasoning. The earth, they say, is suspended in the sphere of the heavens, and the lowest and middle parts of the world are the same as the highest; and from this they derive the opinion that the other half of the world, which lies below this part, cannot lack human inhabitants. They do not, however, notice that even if we were to believe, or by some other rational means to demonstrate, that the world is a sphere or a globe, it would still not follow that the land on the other side of it is exposed, and not covered by 'the gathering together of the waters'.³⁶ Again, even if the land were exposed, it would not immediately follow that it must have men on it. For there is no falsehood of any kind in Scripture: the fidelity of the account of the past which it gives is borne out by the fact that so many of its predictions have

³⁵ Cf. Cicero, *Acad. post.*, 2,39,123; Lactantius, *Div. inst.*, 3,24; Augustine, *De gen. ad lit.*, 2,9,20.

³⁶ Gen. 1,10.

been fulfilled. And it would be too absurd to say that some men might have sailed from one side of the earth to the other, arriving there having crossed the immense tract of the ocean, so that the human race, descended from the one first man, should be established there also.

Let us, then, search among those peoples of mankind who were, we gather, divided in those days into seventy-two nations and the same number of languages, to see if we can find among them the City of God on pilgrimage here on earth. We have brought our account of it down to the Flood and the Ark, and we have shown how it then continued in the sons of Noah through his blessings upon them, and especially upon the eldest, who was called Shem; for Japheth was blessed only in that he should dwell in his brother's houses.

10 Of the generations of Shem, in whose progeny
the course of City of God is directed towards
Abraham

Now, then, we must follow the succession of generations from Shem himself, to show us the City of God after the Flood in the same way as the succession of generations from him who was called Seth showed it before the Flood. It is for this reason that the Divine Scripture, after showing us the earthly city in Babylon, that is, in 'confusion', returns to the patriarch Shem and, by way of recapitulation, gives an account of the order of the generations down to Abraham. This account also records the number of years that passed before each man named begat the son belonging to this succession, and how long he lived all told. And we must here take note of the passage mentioned earlier, when I promised to explain what is meant when it is said of the sons of Heber, 'The name of one was Peleg; for in his days was the earth divided.'³⁷ For how are we to understand the statement that the earth was then divided, other than in terms of its division by the diversity of languages?

The rest of the sons of Shem, however, are omitted, because they do not belong to that sequence of generations which brings us down to Abraham: just as, before the Flood, only those generations were

³⁷ Gen. 10,25; cf. Ch. 3.

given which led to Noah in the line of descent from the son of Adam whose name was Seth. The account of the generations begins thus: 'These are the generations of Shem: Shem was an hundred years old, and begat Arphaxad two years after the flood: and Shem lived after he begat Arphaxad five hundred years, and begat sons and daughters, and then he died.'³⁸ In what follows, the others are mentioned in the same way. In each case, the year of his life is given in which each man begat the son belonging to the sequence of generations leading to Abraham; and we are told how many years he lived after that. Also, it is mentioned that he begat other sons and daughters, so that we may understand from what sources the population was able to increase. Otherwise, if we knew only of those few men whose names are recorded, this might give us pause to wonder, like children, how such vast tracts of lands and kingdoms could have been replenished by the offspring of Shem. This would be especially so in the case of the kingdom of the Assyrians. For it was from there that Ninus, the conqueror of peoples throughout the East, ruled in enormous prosperity, and transferred to his successor an empire of vast extent and stability, which was to endure for many ages.

In order not to prolong our task unduly, however, we shall not here place on record the number of years that each member of this sequence of generations lived, but only the age at which each begat his son. In this way, we shall arrive at the number of years from the end of the Flood down to the time of Abraham; and anything else that compels our attention will be touched upon briefly as we go.

In the second year after the Flood, then, Shem begat Arphaxad. When he was 135 years old, Arphaxad begat Cainan. When Cainan was 130 years old, he begat Salah; and Salah himself was the same age when he begat Heber. Heber was 134 years old when he begat Peleg, in whose days the earth was divided. Peleg lived 130 years and begat Reu; and Reu lived 132 years and begat Serug. Serug lived 130 years and begat Nahor. Nahor lived seventy-nine years and begat Terah. And Terah lived seventy years and begat Abram, whose name God subsequently changed, calling him Abraham.³⁹

³⁸ Gen. 11,10f.

³⁹ Gen. 11,10ff; 17,5.

And so the years from the Flood down to Abraham come to 1,072 according to our standard version, that is, the Septuagint translation. We are told, however, that a much smaller number of years is found in the Hebrew texts; and for this discrepancy there is offered either no explanation or one very difficult to understand.

Thus, when we look for the City of God among those seventy-two tribes, we cannot with certainty affirm that, at that time, when there was only one tongue – one way of speaking, that is – the human race had already been so alienated from the worship of the true God that true piety remained only in those generations which were descended from the seed of Shem through Arphaxad, leading to Abraham. But, because of the pride shown in building a tower to reach up to heaven, the city, that is, the society, of the ungodly now appeared. Perhaps this city had not existed before that time; or perhaps it lay hidden; or perhaps both cities existed continuously, the godly city represented by the two sons of Noah who were blessed by their father, and by their posterity, and the ungodly by the son who was cursed, and in his progeny, among whom there arose that ‘mighty hunter against the Lord’. It is not easy to judge between these possibilities.

For it may be – and this is the more credible possibility – that, even before Babylon had begun to be built, there were already, among the offspring of the two good sons, men who held God in contempt, and worshippers of God among the offspring of Ham. In any case, we must believe that the world was never without men of both these kinds. Indeed, even when it is said, ‘they are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one’, in both the psalms which contain these words we also read, ‘Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge, who eat up my people as they eat bread?’ Even then, therefore, there was a people of God. Hence the words, ‘there is none that doeth good, no, not one’, are spoken of the sons of men, not of the sons of God. For the previous verse reads, ‘The Lord looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God’;⁴⁰ and after this are added the words which show that all the ‘sons of men’ are reprobate: that is, all those

⁴⁰ Psalm 14,2ff; 53,2ff.

who belong to the city which lives according to men, not according to God.

11 That the first language in use among men was the one subsequently called Hebrew, after Heber, in whose family it remained when the diversity of languages began

So then, just as there were sons of pestilence in the world when all men had one language (for there was only one language before the Flood, yet all men deserved to be obliterated by the Flood, except for the one household of the righteous Noah), so also when the nations received the punishment which their ungodly presumption deserved and were divided by diversity of languages, and the city of the ungodly received the name 'Confusion', that is, was called Babylon: even then there existed the house of Heber, in which that language remained which was formerly the language of all mankind. As I have remarked above,⁴ it is for this reason that Heber is mentioned first in the account given of those sons of Shem who were the ancestors of each of the nations, even though Heber was Shem's great-great grandson: that is, is found to be fifth in line of descent from Shem. The same language, therefore – which is not improperly believed to have been the one common at first to the whole human race – remained in use in his family after the other nations were divided by different languages. This is why it was thereafter called Hebrew; for there was then a need for it to be distinguished from the other languages by a name of its own, just as those others were in turn given names of their own. When there was only one language, however, it had been called only 'the human tongue' or 'human speech', since it was the only language spoken by the whole human race.

But someone will say that if it was in the days of Peleg, the son of Heber, that the earth was divided by different languages – that is, the languages thereafter spoken by men on earth – then the language formerly common to all men should rather have been called by the name of Peleg. We must understand, however, that Heber gave to his son the name that he did, and called him Peleg,

⁴ Ch. 3.

which means 'division', precisely because Peleg was born to him at the time when the earth was divided by languages: at the very time, that is, indicated by the statement that 'in his days was the earth divided'. For if Heber had not still been alive when the multitude of languages was created, the language which managed to remain that of his family would not have taken its name from him. We are, therefore, to believe that this was the first language, common to all, since the multiplication and change of languages came about as a punishment, and certainly it was right that the people of God should be beyond the scope of this punishment.

Nor is it without significance that Hebrew was the language used by Abraham, but that he could not transmit it to all his offspring, but only to those who were descended from him through Jacob: to those who, by coming together to form the people of God in the most notable and eminent fashion, were able to keep the covenants and to preserve the stock from which Christ came. And Heber himself did not hand that language on to all his progeny, but only to the line whose generations led down to Abraham. Thus, even though we have no clear evidence that any godly race of men existed at the time when Babylon was being founded by the ungodly, this obscurity serves not to thwart the interest of the enquirer, but, rather, to stimulate it. For we read that, at first, all mankind had but one language; also, Heber is mentioned before all the sons of Shem, even though he is fifth in line of descent from him; and Hebrew is the name of the language preserved by the authority of the patriarchs and prophets not only in their speech but also in their sacred writings. And so when it is asked where, after the division of languages, that language could have persisted which had formerly been the common one (for there can be no doubt that, where that language survived, the punishment brought about elsewhere by a change of language did not take effect), what other answer can be given than that it survived in the nation of that man from whom the language took its name? We have here no small indication of the righteousness of that nation: in the fact, that is, that when other nations were chastised by the change of languages, such punishment did not extend to that one.

But now another question arises: how could Heber and his son Peleg each have founded nations, if the same language continued to be used by both of them? Also it is certain that the Hebrew nation

was descended from Heber to Abraham, and after that through Abraham until Israel became a great people. How was it, then, that all the recorded descendants of the three sons of Noah founded separate nations, if Heber and Peleg did not? Surely the most probable explanation is that the giant Nimrod, though named separately because of his exceptional power and the stature of his body, also founded a nation of his own – so that the number of the nations and languages therefore remains at seventy-two – whereas Peleg is mentioned not because he founded a people (for his people was the Hebrew nation itself, and his language was Hebrew), but because of the importance of the time in which he lived; for it was in his days that the earth was divided.

Nor should we be troubled by the question of how the giant Nimrod could have been alive when Babylon was founded and the confusion of languages took place, from which came the division of the nations. For though Heber was sixth in the line of descent from Noah, and Nimrod fourth, this does not mean that they could not both have been alive at the same time. Such cases occur where men live longer and there are fewer generations, or where lives are shorter and there are more generations; or when men are born later where there are fewer generations, and earlier where there are more. We must certainly understand that, when the earth was divided, the other descendants of the sons of Noah – the ones who are mentioned as having been the fathers of nations – had not only been born, but had also attained an age when they might have families large enough to be worthy of the name of ‘nations’. Hence we must by no means assume that they were necessarily born in the order in which we read of them. Otherwise, how could the twelve sons of Joktan, who was another of Heber’s sons, the brother of Peleg, have already founded nations, if we are to infer from the fact that he is mentioned after his brother Peleg that Joktan was born after Peleg? For Peleg was born at the time when the earth was divided; and so we must understand that, though Peleg is indeed mentioned before Joktan, he was born long after his brother, whose twelve sons already had families large enough to be divided up according to their own languages. For a son may be mentioned earlier even though he was born later, as in the case of the offspring of the three sons of Noah: those descended from Japheth, the youngest, are

mentioned first; then those descended from Ham, the middle son, and, last, those from Shem, who was the first and eldest.

The names of some of those nations have survived, so that it is clear even to this day how they are derived. For example, 'Assyrian' comes from Asshur, and 'Hebrew' from Heber. Some names, however, have become so altered during long ages of time that even the most learned men who study the history of ancient times have not been able to discover the origins of all of them. The Egyptians, for instance, are said to trace their origin to the son of Ham called Mizraim; but, in this case, nothing remains of the sound of the original name. So too with the Ethiopians, who are said to belong to the posterity of the son of Ham who was called Cush. All things considered, it seems that more names have undergone change than have survived unchanged.

12 Of the era beginning with Abraham, when the new order of the sacred succession is inaugurated

Let us now examine the progress of the City of God from the era beginning with father Abraham onwards, when our knowledge of it is supported by more evidence, and we read of clearer instances of the divine promises which we now see fulfilled in Christ.

As we have learned from the indications of Holy Scripture, then, Abraham was born in the land of the Chaldees,⁴² a land which belonged to the kingdom of the Assyrians. But ungodly superstitions prevailed among the Chaldees even then, as among other nations. Only in the house of Terah, therefore, to whom Abraham was born, was the worship of the one true God practised; and it is reasonable to believe that the Hebrew language survived only there. (Although, according to the narrative of Joshua the son of Nun,⁴³ even Terah himself served the gods of other peoples in Mesopotamia, just as the people of God did in Egypt, when they had become a more distinct people.) Meanwhile, the rest of the descendants of Heber gradually merged with other languages and other nations.

Thenceforth, just as only the house of Noah had remained after the flood of waters, to bring about the restoration of the human

⁴² Cf. Gen. 11,28.

⁴³ Josh. 24,2.

race, so now only the house of Terah remained in the midst of the flood of superstition covering the whole world, as the place where the City of God was tended and planted. In the former case, an account is first given of the generations down to Noah, together with the numbers of their years, and an explanation of the cause of the Flood; then come the words, 'These are the generations of Noah.'⁴⁴ All these things come before God begins to speak to Noah of the building of the Ark. So too in the present case, after the account of the generations of Noah's son called Shem down to Abraham, the importance of the point at which we have now arrived is similarly shown by the following words: 'Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees. And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran.'⁴⁵ This Haran was the father of Milcah and also the father of Iscah; and Iscah is believed to be the same person as Sarah, Abraham's wife.

13 What seems to have been the reason why no mention is made of Terah's son Nahor in the account of his migration when he left the land of Chaldees and passed over into Mesopotamia

Next, Scripture tells us how Terah and his family left the land of the Chaldees, came into Mesopotamia, and dwelt in Haran. But it is silent as to one of the sons of Terah, who was called Nahor. It is as if Terah did not bring Nahor with him; for the narrative says, 'And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came into Haran, and dwelt there.'⁴⁶ Nowhere here is there any mention of Nahor and his wife Milcah. Later, however, when Abraham sent his servant to fetch a wife for his son Isaac, we find this account: 'And the servant took ten camels of the

⁴⁴ Gen. 6,9.

⁴⁵ Gen. 11,27ff.

⁴⁶ Gen. 11,31.

camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor.⁴⁷

By this and other testimonies of sacred history it is shown that Abraham's brother Nahor also left the land of the Chaldees and established his seat in Mesopotamia where Abraham dwelt with his father Terah. Why, then, did the Scripture not mention him when Terah set out from the nation of the Chaldees with his family and dwelt in Mesopotamia? For it mentions not only Abraham his son, but also says that he took with him Sarah his daughter-in-law and Lot his grandson. Was this, I wonder, because Nahor had sundered himself from the godliness of his father and brother and embraced the superstition of the Chaldees, and because, subsequently, he also migrated, either because he repented of his error or because he incurred suspicion and suffered persecution?

For in the book entitled 'Judith', when Holofernes, an enemy of the Israelites, asked what that nation was, and whether he ought to make war against it, Achior, chief of the Ammonites, answered him thus:

Let my lord hear the word of the mouth of his servant, and I will show thee the truth concerning this people that dwell in these mountains, and there shall no lie come out of thy servant's mouth. This people came out of the stock of the Chaldeans, and they dwelt before in Mesopotamia, because they would not follow the gods of their fathers, that were glorious in the land of Chaldaea: but they left the way of their ancestors and worshipped the God of heaven, Whom they knew: so that they cast them out from the face of their gods, and they fled into Mesopotamia, and dwelt there many days. Then their God commanded them to depart from the place where they were, and to go into the land of Canaan where they dwelt⁴⁸

and so on with the other things told by Achior the Ammonite. It is clear from this that the house of Terah had suffered persecution by the Chaldees for the true religion, by which they worshipped the one and true God.

⁴⁷ Gen. 24,10.

⁴⁸ Judith 5,5ff.

14 Of the age of Terah, who completed the span of his life in Haran

Now when Terah passed away in Mesopotamia, where he is said to have attained the age of 205 years, the promises made by God to Abraham were already beginning to be revealed. It is written, 'And the days of Terah in Haran were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran.'⁴⁹ We are not, however, to take this as meaning that he passed all his days there, but only that he completed all the days of his life there, which came to 205 years. Otherwise, it would not be known how many years Terah lived, since it is not recorded how old he was when he came to Haran; and it would be absurd to suppose that, in the sequence of the generations, where the number of years lived by each man is diligently recorded, the number of the years of this man's life alone is not recorded for posterity. There are men, of course, whom Scripture mentions without saying anything of their ages; but this is only because they are not mentioned in connexion with a line of descent in which the chronology of each succeeding generation is recorded. By contrast, the line which conducts us from Adam to Noah, and then on to Abraham, does not include anyone without also telling us the number of the years of his life.

15 Of the time of Abraham's departure, when at God's command he went forth from Haran

After the death of Terah, Abraham's father, has been recorded, we then read, 'Now the Lord said to Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house', and so on.⁵⁰ But we must not assume that because this command immediately follows Terah's death in the order of things told in the book, it must therefore also have done so in the order of events. Indeed, if this were so, an insoluble problem would arise. For after those words of God to Abraham, the Scripture says, 'So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed

⁴⁹ Gen. 11,32.

⁵⁰ Gen. 12,1.

out of Haran.⁵¹ But how could this be true, if he departed out of Haran after his father's death? For, as we noted above, Terah begat Abraham when he was seventy years old; and if to this number we add seventy-five, which was Abraham's age when he departed out of Haran, the total is 145 years. This, then, was Terah's age when Abraham departed out of that city of Mesopotamia; for Abraham was then seventy-five years old, and so his father, who had begotten him when he was seventy years old, was, as I have said, 145 years old. Abraham did not, therefore, depart after his father's death – that is, after the 205 years lived by Terah. Rather, we see beyond doubt that, since Abraham was seventy-five years old at the time of his departure from that place, his father, who had begotten him when he was seventy years old, was then 145 years old.

We must, then, understand from this that, as is its custom, Scripture is here going back to a point in time that the narrative has already passed. Again, in an earlier passage, having chronicled the descendants of Noah's sons 'according to their tongues and nations',⁵² as it says, it nonetheless goes on to say later, as if this followed in order of time, that 'the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech'.⁵³ How, then, could they have been chronicled according to their nations and according to their tongues if all men at that time had only one language? It must be that the narrative goes back to a point it had already passed for the sake of recapitulation. So too, therefore, in the passage which we are here considering: Scripture says first, 'And the days of Terah in Haran were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran';⁵⁴ and then it returns to a point which it had omitted for the sake of first completing the story of Terah which it had begun. 'Now the Lord', it says, 'said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country', and so on. And after these words of God the narrative goes on, 'So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.' This took place, then, when his father was 145 years old, for Abraham was then seventy-five years old. But the problem can be solved in another way, by reckoning the seventy-five years of

⁵¹ Gen. 12,4.

⁵² Gen. 10,31

⁵³ Gen. 11,1.

⁵⁴ Gen. 11,32

Abraham when he departed out of Haran from the time of his deliverance from the fire of the Chaldees,⁵⁵ instead of from his birth, as if this deliverance were his true birthday.

However, the blessed Stephen, when he told of these events in the Acts of the Apostles, said, 'The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee.'⁵⁶ According to these words of Stephen, it was not after his father's death that God spoke to Abraham – for Terah died in Haran, where his son Abraham also dwelt with him; rather, it was before Abraham dwelt in that city, although he was already in Mesopotamia: he had, that is, by now departed from the Chaldees. For when Stephen adds, 'Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Haran', this does not refer to what happened after God had spoken to him (for it was not after God's words that he departed from the land of the Chaldees: Stephen says that he was already in Mesopotamia when God spoke to him). Rather, it refers to the whole period, 'then' meaning 'after the time when he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran'. So too with what follows, 'and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell, and your fathers also': Stephen does not here mean 'after his father died, he departed from Haran' but 'after his father died, then God removed him into this land'.

We are to understand, then, that God had spoken to Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, but that Abraham had come into Haran with his father, in obedience to the command of God, and had departed thence when he was seventy-five years old and his father was 145. We are told that his settling in the land of Canaan, not his leaving Haran, took place after his father's death, since his father was already dead when Abraham acquired the field in Canaan of which he became the owner after his father's death, but not before it. As for what God said to him when he was already established in Mesopotamia, that is, when he

⁵⁵ For the legend that Abraham was thrown into a fire for refusing to worship the fire-god of the Chaldees, see Jerome, *Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim*, ed. P. Lagarde (Turnhout, 1959), 19; cf. also Augustine, *Quaest. in Hept.*, 1,25.

⁵⁶ Acts 7,2ff.

had already gone forth from the land of the Chaldees, 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house': this was not a command to remove his body from there – for he had already done that – but to tear his mind away from it. For he had not yet departed thence in spirit if he still clung to the hope and desire to return; and, according to God's command and with His help, and by his own obedience, it was fitting for him to cut off this hope. Certainly, there is nothing incredible in the supposition that it was when Nahor later followed his father into Haran that Abraham fulfilled the Lord's command to depart out of Haran, taking with him his wife Sarah and his nephew Lot.

16 Of the order and nature of the promises made by God to Abraham

We have now to consider the promises which God made to Abraham. For in these promises the oracles of our God, that is, of the true God, begin to appear more clearly: oracles concerning that godly people whom the authority of the prophets foretold. The first of these promises is contained in the following passage:

Now the Lord said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, and go unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.⁵⁷

We should note, then, that two things are here promised to Abraham. The first is that his seed should possess the land of Canaan; and this is signified when it is said to him, 'Go unto a land that I will shew thee.' The second, and far greater, promise, concerns not his bodily seed, but his spiritual, whereby he is not only the father of the nation of Israel, but of all the nations that follow in the footsteps of his faith; and this promise is given in these words: 'and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed'.

⁵⁷ Gen. 12, 1ff.

Eusebius considers that this promise was made when Abraham was seventy-five years old, on the supposition that Abraham departed out of Haran soon after it was made; for Scripture cannot be contradicted, and we read there that 'Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.'⁵⁸ But if the promise was made in that year, it is clear that Abraham had already settled in Haran with his father; for he could not have departed thence had he not first dwelt there. Does this, then, contradict what Stephen says: 'The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran'? No; for it is to be understood that these things – God's promise before Abraham dwelt in Haran; Abraham's dwelling in Haran; and his departure thence – all took place in the same year. And this is not only because Eusebius, in his *Chronicon*, counts from the year of this promise and shows that the Exodus from Egypt, when the Law was given, took place 430 years later, but also because the apostle Paul mentions it.⁵⁹

17 Of the three most outstanding kingdoms of the Gentiles, one of which, that of the Assyrians, was already at the height of its power when Abraham was born

At this time, there were three great kingdoms of the Gentiles, in which the city of the earth-born – that is, the society of men who live according to man – rose to great power under the lordship of the fallen angels. These three kingdoms were those of the Sicyonians, the Egyptians and the Assyrians;⁶⁰ but that of the Assyrians was by far the most mighty and exalted. For king Ninus, son of Belus, had subjugated the peoples of the whole of Asia with the exception of India. When I say 'Asia' here, I do not mean that part which is only one province of greater Asia, but what is called the whole of Asia. Some have suggested that this is one of the two divisions of the world,⁶¹ though most regard it as a third part of the

⁵⁸ Eusebius/Jerome, *Chron.*, ed. Helm, 24,234; Gen. 12,4.

⁵⁹ Cf. Gal. 3,17.

⁶⁰ Cf. Bk xviii,2ff.

⁶¹ Cf. Sallust, *Bell. Jugurth.*, 17,3.

whole world, which consists of Asia, Europe and Africa. This does not make an equal division. For the part called Asia extends from the south, through the east, to the north; Europe extends from the north to the west; and then Africa begins and extends from the west to the south. Hence Europe and Africa are seen to contain half the world, while Asia by itself contains the other half. But Europe and Africa are regarded as two separate parts because water flows from the Ocean into the space between them, and forms what we call the Great Sea. If you divide the world into two parts, therefore, the east and the west, Asia will be in one, and both Europe and Africa in the other. That is why, of the three kingdoms which were then foremost, only that of the Sicyonians was not under the Assyrians, because it was in Europe. By contrast, how could that of the Egyptians not be subject to those who held the whole of Asia, with the sole exception, it is said, of India?

In Assyria, then, the lordship of the ungodly city prevailed. Its capital was that Babylon whose name, 'Confusion', is most apt for the city of the earth-born. Ninus was reigning there at this time, after the death of his father Belus, who had reigned for sixty-five years as the first king there. His son Ninus, who succeeded to the kingdom on the death of his father, reigned for fifty-two years; and he had possessed the kingdom for forty-three years when Abraham was born. This was about 1,200 years before Rome was founded as a second Babylon, as it were, in the West.

18 Of God's second assurance to Abraham, in which the land of Canaan is promised to him and his seed

Abraham departed out of Haran, therefore, when he was seventy-five years old and his father was 145. With his nephew Lot and his wife Sarah, he came into the land of Canaan, and passed through it to Shechem, where he again received a divine oracle, which is described thus: 'And the Lord appeared unto Abram and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land.'⁶² Nothing here is said of that seed whereby he became the father of all nations; the only seed spoken of is that whereby he is the father of the one nation of Israel; for it was this seed which was to possess that land.

⁶² Gen. 12.7.

19 How in Egypt God preserved the honour of Sarah, whom Abraham had said was his sister rather than his wife

Then, when he had built an altar there and called upon the name of the Lord, Abraham departed from that place and dwelt in the wilderness; and from there he was compelled by the necessity of famine to go down into Egypt. While in Egypt, he called his wife his sister;⁶³ nor was this a falsehood, for she was that also, because closely related to him by blood. In the same way, Lot was called Abraham's brother, because he was similarly related to him, being his brother's son. Thus, Abraham said nothing of her being his wife, although he did not deny it. He committed her honour to God, and, as a man, he also safeguarded himself against human treachery; for if he had not secured himself against peril as far as it was possible to do so, he would have been tempting God, rather than putting his hope in Him. As to this, however, I have already said enough in my replies to the calumnies of Faustus the Manichaeon.⁶⁴ In fact, Abraham's trust in the Lord was justified when Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, who had taken Sarah as his wife, was grievously afflicted and restored her to her husband. God forbid, however, that we should believe that she had been defiled by intercourse with another man; for it is much more likely that Pharaoh's great affliction did not permit him to have such intercourse.

20 Of the separation of Lot and Abraham by an agreement which did not diminish their love

When Abraham returned from Egypt to the place whence he had come, his nephew Lot left him and went away into the land of Sodom, although without any lessening of their love. Indeed, they had become wealthy men, and had begun to have many herdsmen for their flocks, who squabbled among themselves. Abraham and Lot therefore separated to avoid strife and discord between their servants; otherwise, human nature being what it is, quarrels might have arisen between themselves also. In order to forestall such an evil, Abraham spoke the following words to Lot:

⁶³ Gen. 12,10ff.

⁶⁴ *Adv. Faust. Man.*, 22,36.

Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.⁶⁵

Perhaps this was the origin of the peaceable custom among men whereby, when any land is to be shared, the elder makes the division and the younger has the choice.⁶⁶

21 Of God's third promise, by which the land of Canaan was pledged to Abraham and his seed for ever

Abraham and Lot therefore departed from one another and dwelt separately, Abraham in the land of Canaan, and Lot among the men of Sodom. This came about not as a result of unseemly discord, but because of the need to succour their families. And the Lord now spoke to Abraham in a third oracle:

Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the sands of the earth: so that if a man can number the sands of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.⁶⁷

It does not appear clearly here whether this promise also includes the former promise whereby Abraham was made the father of all nations. For when it is said, 'I will make thy seed as the sands the earth', this might seem to link it with the earlier promise; but, then again, this statement is surely an instance of what the Greeks call *hyperbole*: a figure of speech, and not to be taken literally. Indeed, that the Scriptures customarily make use of this and other figures of speech is something that no one who studies them will doubt;

⁶⁵ Gen. 13,8f.

⁶⁶ Cf. Seneca, *Controversiae*, 6,3.

⁶⁷ Gen. 13,14ff.

and this figure of speech – that is, this manner of speaking – occurs when what is said is greatly in excess of what the statement actually means. Who does not see how incomparably greater the number of the sands is than the number of all human beings could possibly be, from Adam himself even down to the end of the world? How much more numerous are they, therefore, than the seed of Abraham: not only that part of his seed which belongs to the race of Israel, but also those who are and will be of his seed according to the imitation of his faith, in all the nations throughout the whole world! The number of this seed is certainly very small in comparison with the multitude of the ungodly; and yet these few make up an innumerable multitude of their own, and this fact is signified, in hyperbole, by ‘the sands of the earth’. This multitude, which is promised to Abraham, is indeed innumerable to men, but not to God; for to God not even the sands of the earth are innumerable.

Since, then, it is not only to the Israelite nation that the promise of many sons is given, but to the whole seed of Abraham in the spiritual rather than the fleshly sense, and since these latter are more aptly compared to the multitude of the sands, we can therefore understand that the promise here given is of both a fleshly and a spiritual posterity. I say that this passage is not clear, however, because even the nation born of Abraham through his grandson Jacob has increased so greatly that it has filled almost all the parts of the world. For this reason, this nation itself might have been compared, in hyperbole, to the multitude of the sands, for even in itself this nation is innumerable to man.

No one, however, doubts that the land here referred to is that called Canaan. But when it is said, ‘To thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever [*in saeculum*]’, some persons may be troubled if they understand ‘for ever’ to mean ‘for all eternity’. If, however, they take *saeculum* here in the light of the belief, which we faithfully hold, that the present age [*saeculum*] will endure only until the beginning of the age to come, there will then be nothing to trouble them.⁶⁸ For even though the Israelites have been expelled from Jerusalem, they still remain in other cities of the land of Canaan, and they will remain there to the end of the age. Moreover, the

⁶⁸ Cf. Ch. 26.

whole land, because it is inhabited by Christians, is itself the seed of Abraham.

22 Of Abraham's victory over the enemies of Sodom, when he rescued Lot from captivity and was blessed by the priest Melchizedek

Having received this promise, Abraham journeyed on and dwelt in another place in the same land, near the oak of Mamre which was in Hebron.⁶⁹ Then came the war of the five kings against four, when the enemy attacked the men of Sodom. Sodom was overcome, and Lot was led away captive; but Abraham restored him to liberty, bringing with him to the battle 318 of his trained servants, born in his own house, and winning a victory for the kings of Sodom. He did not, however, wish to bear away any of the spoils when the king on whose behalf he had won the victory offered them.⁷⁰ But he received at that time an ample blessing from Mechizedek, who was the priest of the most high God, and of whom many great things are written in the epistle to the Hebrews⁷¹ which most say is the work of the apostle Paul, though some deny it.⁷² Here, indeed, is the first appearance of that sacrifice which is now offered to God by Christians all over the world, in which is fulfilled what was long afterwards said in prophecy to Christ, Who was yet to come in the flesh: 'Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek'⁷³ – not, that is, 'after the order of Aaron'; for his order was to be abolished when the things prefigured by these shadows came into the light of day.

⁶⁹ Gen. 13,18.

⁷⁰ Gen. 14, *passim*.

⁷¹ Heb. 7, *passim*.

⁷² Cf. Augustine, *De doct. Christ.*, 2,8,13. See also D. de Bruyne in *Miscellanea Agostiniana* (Rome, 1931), vol. II, p. 537.

⁷³ Psalm 110,4.

23 Of the Lord's word to Abraham, by which He
promised that Abraham's posterity should be
multiplied according to the multitude of the stars;
believing in which Abraham was justified even before
his circumcision

The word of the Lord then came to Abraham in a vision, and the Lord promised to be his shield and his exceeding great reward.⁷⁴ Abraham, however, anxious for his posterity, said that a certain Eliezer, the steward of his house, was to be his heir; and straightway an heir was promised him: not that household servant, but one who was to come forth from Abraham himself. Also, he was once again promised an innumerable seed, not like the sands of the earth, but like the stars of heaven.⁷⁵ Here, it seems that the promise relates to a posterity exalted in heavenly felicity; for what is the multitude of the stars of heaven compared to the sands of the earth? Then again, however, it might be said that this comparison is similar to the other, in that the stars also cannot be numbered, because we must believe that not all of them can be seen. For the more acute the observer's sight is, the more stars he sees; and it may be supposed that some stars are hidden from the view of even the keenest eyes, quite apart from those stars which are said to rise and set in another part of the world, far removed from us. Finally, as for those who boast that they have surveyed and recorded the whole number of the stars – Aratus, for example, and Eudoxus, and others, if there are any – the authority of this book holds them in contempt.⁷⁶

Here also occurs that statement which the apostle recalls in order to commend to us the grace of God: 'Abraham believed in God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.'⁷⁷ The apostle mentions this lest the circumcised should boast, and refuse to admit uncircumcised peoples to the faith of Christ.⁷⁸ For when these promises were made, when Abraham's faith 'was accounted to him for righteousness', he had not yet been circumcised.

⁷⁴ Cf. Gen. 15,1.

⁷⁵ Gen. 15,1ff.

⁷⁶ Cf. Cicero, *De rep.*, 1,14,22.

⁷⁷ Gen. 15,6.

⁷⁸ Gal. 3,6; Rom. 4,3.

24 Of the meaning of the sacrifice which Abraham was commanded to offer when he desired to be instructed in the things he believed

In the same vision, when God spoke to Abraham, He said this to him also: 'I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.' Abraham then asked God for a sign whereby he might know that he would inherit it; and God said to him,

Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against the other; but the birds divided he not. And when the fowls came down upon the carcases, Abram drove them away. And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. And He said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.⁷⁹

All these things were done and said in a divine vision; but to discuss each particular detail of it would take too long, and would exceed the scope of this work. We must, therefore deal only with what it is sufficient for us to know. It is said that Abraham believed in God and that this was counted to him for righteousness. After

⁷⁹ Gen. 15,7ff.

this, however, he was not deficient in his faith when he said, 'Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?' (that is, the land promised to him as his inheritance). For he did not say, 'How shall I know?' as if he did not yet believe. He said, 'Whereby shall I know?' – that is, he sought some sign whereby he might know how what he believed already would come to pass. In the same way, there was no lack of faith on the part of the Virgin Mary when she said, 'How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?'⁸⁰ She was certain that it would come to pass, but she asked in what way it was to come to pass; and when she asked this, she was told. So too in the case of Abraham, a sign was given in the form of the animals: the heifer, the she-goat, the ram, and the two birds, the turtledove and the pigeon. This was done so that he might know that the event concerning whose future occurrence he already had no doubt would come about in the manner indicated by those signs.

Thus, the heifer may have signified the people placed under the yoke of the Law, and the she-goat the same people in their future condition of sin, and the ram the same people again, but now as ruling. It is said that those animals were three years old because the important eras of time are those extending from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, and from Abraham to David, who, after Saul's rejection,⁸¹ was the first to be established on the throne of the Israelite kingdom by the Lord's will. Hence it was in this third period, extending from Abraham to David, that the people came of age, as it were, and embarked upon the third stage of their life. Or there may be some other, more suitable interpretation of these signs.

I do not in any way doubt, however, that Abraham's spiritual descendants are prefigured by the addition of the turtledove and the pigeon. For, when it is said, 'the birds divided he not', this is because carnal beings are divided among themselves, whereas spiritual beings are in no way divided, whether, like the turtle dove, they remove themselves from the busy world of human affairs, or, like the pigeon, pass their lives among them. Both those birds, moreover, are simple and harmless, thus signifying that in the people of Israel, to which that land was to be given, there would be individual sons of the promise and heirs of the kingdom destined

⁸⁰ Luke, 1,34.

⁸¹ Cf. 1 Sam. 26.

to continue in eternal felicity. But the fowls which descended on the carcases when they were divided do not signify any good thing. Rather, they represent the spirits of the lower air, seeking their own special food in this division of carnal creatures. Moreover, the fact that Abraham sat by them signifies that even among those divisions of carnal creatures the truly faithful will persevere to the end. And the dread that assailed Abraham at sunset, and the horror of great darkness that fell upon him, signify that, when this world ends, great woe and tribulation will come upon the faithful. Of this, the Lord says in the Gospel, 'For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning.'⁸²

As to what was said to Abraham, 'Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years': this is a very clear prophecy concerning the people of Israel, who were to be slaves in Egypt. That people did not, however, spend four hundred years in the same condition of servitude, enduring affliction under the Egyptians. Rather, it was foretold that this would happen in the course of the next four hundred years. In the same way, it is written of Terah, Abraham's father, that 'the days of Terah in Haran were two hundred and five years',⁸³ not because all those years were spent there, but because they were completed there. So too here, the introduction of the statement, 'they shall afflict them four hundred years', means that they were being thus afflicted at the time when this period of years was completed, not that the whole of it was spent in such affliction. Indeed, four hundred years is given only as a round figure. The true period was somewhat longer, whether calculated from the time of those promises to Abraham, or from the birth of Isaac because he was the seed of Abraham for whose sake those predictions were made. For, as we have said above, from the time when Abraham was seventy-five years old, when the first promise was made, down to the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, 430 years are counted. And in recalling these things the apostle says, 'And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the Law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none

⁸² Matt. 24,21.

⁸³ Gen. 11,32.

effect.⁸⁴ In those days, therefore, those 430 years could be called four hundred, because they were not much more. This is all the more true if we count from the time when God showed Abraham the vision and spoke to him, for a goodly portion of those years had by then elapsed; or from the time when Isaac was born to his father, now a hundred years old, twenty-five years after the first promise, when only 405 of those of 430 years remained, which God chose to call four hundred. As for the rest of God's prediction, contained in the words which follow, no one will doubt that it refers to the Israelite people.

The Scripture then goes on, 'When the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces'; and this signifies that, at the end, the carnal are to be judged by fire. For the affliction of the City of God which is to be anticipated in time to come, under Antichrist – such an affliction as has never been seen before – is signified by Abraham's 'horror of great darkness' just as the sun was going down: that is, when the end of the world is drawing nigh. In the same way, this fire which appeared when the sun went down – that is, at the very end – signifies the day of judgment, when the carnal men who are to be saved by fire will be separated from those who are condemned to punishment in the fire.⁸⁵

Then comes the covenant made with Abraham; and this clearly refers to the land of Canaan, naming eleven rivers there, from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates. This does not, however, mean from the great river of Egypt which is called the Nile, but from the small river which divides Egypt from Palestine, where the city of Rhinocorura is located.

25 Of Hagar, Sarah's handmaid, whom Sarah herself chose to be Abraham's concubine

Then follows the time when Abraham's sons were born to him, the one by the handmaid Hagar, and the other by Sarah the free woman; and I have already spoken of these in the previous book.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Gal. 3,17.

⁸⁵ Cf. 1 Cor. 3,12ff; Bk XXI,26; Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 68f.

⁸⁶ Bk xv, 2f

Having regard to the circumstances, however, Abraham is in no way to be reproached with wrongdoing for having taken this concubine.⁸⁷ For he used her for the purpose of producing offspring, and not in order to gratify his lust: not to insult his wife, but rather to obey her. For, given that she could have no children by nature, she believed that it would be a solace to her own barrenness if she made her handmaid's fruitful womb her own, by her own choice. Thus, as a woman, she made use of that right of which the apostle speaks: 'And likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife',⁸⁸ and she did this in order to produce a child from another because she could not do so from herself. There is no lascivious desire here, and no element of guilty shame. The handmaid is handed over to the husband by the wife for the sake of offspring, and she is received by the husband for the sake of offspring. The aim of both husband and handmaid is not guilty pleasure but natural fruit. But when the handmaid was with child, she despised her barren mistress, and Sarah, with womanly jealousy, blamed her husband. Even then, however, Abraham showed that he had been no servile lover, but a free begetter: that he had regarded his wife's virtue even while with Hagar, having sought not his own pleasure, but the fulfilment of Sarah's wish. He had not asked for Hagar, but had taken her; he had come to her, but without cleaving to her; he had given her his seed, but he had not loved her. For he said, 'Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee.'⁸⁹ O, what an excellent man he was, in his use of women! For he treated his wife with restraint, her handmaid with regard, and no one immoderately.

26 Of God's declaration to Abraham, whereby He
promised him a son in his old age by the barren
Sarah, and established him as the father of nations,
and sealed His promise by the sacrament of
circumcision

After this, Ishmael was born of Hagar; and Abraham might have supposed that in Ishmael was fulfilled that promise made to him

⁸⁷ Cf *Adv. Faust. Man.*, 22,30.

⁸⁸ 1 Cor. 7,4.

⁸⁹ Gen. 2,17.

when he had proposed to adopt the steward of his house, and God said, 'This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.'⁹⁰ Therefore, lest it should be thought that this promise had been fulfilled in the handmaid's son,

when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant. And God said unto Abraham, as for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be

⁹⁰ Gen. 15,4

of her. Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? And shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.⁹¹

Here are clearer promises concerning the calling of the nations in Isaac, that is, in the son of the promise, in whom is signified grace, not nature, because he is promised as the son of an old man and a barren old woman. For though God operates in the natural process of procreation also, His grace is more plainly displayed in a case where the working of God is evident because nature is vitiated and failing. And since this was to happen not by generation, but by regeneration, that is why circumcision was commanded at this time, when a son was promised from Sarah. Also, by the fact that God commands the circumcision not only of all the sons, but of the house-born slaves and the purchased slaves also, it is attested that this grace pertains to all men. For what does circumcision signify but the renewal of nature by the sloughing off of old age? And what does the eighth day symbolise but Christ, who rose again after the completion of seven days, that is, after the Sabbath? The names of the parents are also changed: newness resounds throughout the story; and the new covenant is presented, in a veiled manner, in the old. For what is that which we call the Old Testament but a hidden form of the New? And what is that which we call the New Testament but the revelation of the Old?⁹² Abraham's laughter is the exultation of gratitude, not the derision of one who doubts. And the words which he spoke in his heart, 'Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? And shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?' – these are words not of doubt, but of wonder.

⁹¹ Gen. 17,1ff.

⁹² Cf. Heb. 10,1; *Adv. Faust. Man.*, 6,9, above, Bk iv,33.

But when it is said, 'And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession', someone may be troubled by this: by the question of how it may be taken as being fulfilled, or whether its fulfilment is still to be awaited, since no earthly possession whatsoever can be 'everlasting' for any nation. Let him know, then, that our translators use 'everlasting' to mean what the Greeks call *aionios*, which is derived from their word for 'age', *aion* being the Greek equivalent of the Latin word *saeculum*. But the Latin translators have not ventured to render it as 'secular' for fear of conveying a very different meaning. Indeed, many things are called 'secular' which occur in this world but which pass away even in a brief time; but when something is called *aionios*, this means either that it has no end or that it will endure to the end of this age.⁹³

27 Of the man child whose soul is to be cut off if he
has not been circumcised on the eighth day, because
he has broken the covenant of God

Again, someone may be troubled by the question of how we are to understand the statement here that 'the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant'.⁹⁴ For this is in no way the fault of the infant whose soul is said to be about to perish. It is not he who has broken God's covenant, but his elders, who have not taken care to circumcise him: unless, that is, even infants have done so, not in their own lives, but in the origin which they share with all mankind, since all have broken God's covenant in that one man in whom all have sinned.⁹⁵ Many covenants, indeed, are called God's covenants, apart from the two chief ones, the old and the new, which all may learn by reading them. And the first covenant, made with the first man, is undoubtedly this: 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die the death.'⁹⁶ Hence what is

⁹³ Cf. Ch. 21; Augustine, *Quaest. in Hept.*, 1,31.

⁹⁴ Gen. 17,14; cf. Augustine, *Contra Julianum Pelagianum*, 2,6,18.

⁹⁵ Cf. Rom. 5,12.

⁹⁶ Gen. 2,17

written in the book called 'Ecclesiasticus': 'All flesh waxeth old as a garment, and it is a covenant from the beginning that all sinners shall die the death.'⁹⁷ Now, seeing that a more explicit Law was given later, and the apostle says, 'Where no law is, there is no transgression',⁹⁸ how can that psalm be true, wherein we read 'I have accounted all the sinners of the earth transgressors',⁹⁹ unless all those who are held bound by any sin are transgressors of some law?

If, therefore, as the true faith holds, even infants are born sinners, not by their own act but because of their origin (and this is why we confess the necessity for them of the grace of remission of sins), then, by the fact that they are sinners, they are also recognised as transgressors of the law which was given in Paradise. And so both passages of Scripture are true: 'I have accounted all the sinners of the earth transgressors', and 'Where no law is, there is no transgression.' Thus circumcision was instituted as a sign of rebirth because, thanks to the original sin by which God's covenant was first broken, birth itself brings a not-undeserved ruin upon the infant, unless rebirth redeems him. Therefore, those divine words must be understood as if they said, 'He who has not been reborn, that soul shall be cut off from his people', because he broke God's covenant when, in Adam, he himself also sinned, together with all others. For if the passage had said, 'because he hath broken this covenant of mine', we should be compelled to understand it as referring only to circumcision. Since, however, it does not expressly say what sort of covenant the infant has broken, we are free to understand it as referring to a kind of covenant whose infringement could be attributed to an infant.

But, then again, someone may contend that the passage does indeed refer only to circumcision, and that the infant has broken God's covenant by not being circumcised. In this case, however, let him find some way of stating his argument such that it could without absurdity be understood to mean that the child has broken the covenant because it has been broken in him, but not by him. For, surely, we must insist that it would be unjust for the soul of an infant to perish merely because he was uncircumcised through no

⁹⁷ Eccclus. 14,18.

⁹⁸ Rom. 4,15.

⁹⁹ Psalm 119,119 (LXX).

fault of his own, rather than because he was under the bondage of original sin.

28 Of the change of names of Abraham and Sarah,
who, though they could not beget offspring because
of the barrenness of one and the old age of both,
were granted the boon of fruitfulness

God's promise to Abraham, then, so great and so clear, was conveyed to Abraham in the following most evident terms: 'I have made thee the father of many nations, and I will multiply thee exceedingly, and make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will give thee a son by Sarah, and I will bless him, and he will become nations, and kings of nations will come out of him.'¹⁰⁰ And this is a promise which we now see to be fulfilled in Christ. Thereafter the couple are no longer called Abram and Sarai in the Scriptures, as formerly, but Abraham and Sarah, as we have called them from the beginning, since this is what they are now called by everyone. The reason why Abraham's name was changed is given when the Scripture says, 'A father of many nations have I made thee.' This, therefore, must be taken to be the meaning of Abraham, whereas Abram, which he was called formerly, is translated as 'exalted father'. No explanation is offered of Sarah's change of name; but those scholars who have written on the translation of the Hebrew names contained in the sacred writings say that Sarai means 'my princess' whereas Sarah means 'strength'. Hence what is written in the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed.'¹⁰¹

For, as Scripture attests, both of them were old. Sarah was not only barren, but her monthly flow had ceased, so that she could not have borne a child even if she had not been barren. Moreover, even a somewhat older woman can bear a child to a young man for as long as her usual womanly flow continues, but not to an old man; while an older man can still beget a child, but only by a young woman. Abraham was able to do this by Keturah, after the death

¹⁰⁰ Gen. 17,5f; 16.

¹⁰¹ Heb. 11,11; Jerome, *Quaest. Heb. in Gen.*, ed. Lagarde, 7ff; 27; Jerome, *Onomastica sacra*, ed. Lagarde (Turnhout, 1959), 10; 22, 28.

of Sarah, because he found in her the vigour of youth. This, therefore, is what the apostle commends as miraculous; and he says that Abraham's body was 'now dead'¹⁰² only because, by then, at his age, Abraham was no longer capable of begetting a child by every woman who still had some final period of childbearing time remaining. For we must understand that his body was 'dead' only in one specific sense, and not in every way. For if it was dead in all respects it would not be the living body of an old man, but the corpse of a dead one. The question of how Abraham was able to beget children by Keturah is often resolved by saying that the gift of procreation which he had received from the Lord remained even after the death of his wife. Nevertheless, the answer to this question which we have adopted here seems to me preferable. For though an old man of a hundred certainly cannot beget a child by any woman in our own times, this was not true in those days, when men were still living for so long that the passage of a hundred years did not bring a man to the decrepitude of old age.

**29 Of the three men or angels in whom it is said
that the Lord appeared to Abraham at the Oak of
Mamre**

God again appeared to Abraham at the Oak of Mamre in the form of three men; and it is not to be doubted that these were angels. Some, however, suppose that one of them was Christ our Lord, asserting that He became visible on this occasion even before He clothed Himself in flesh. And it is indeed possible for the divine and invisible Power, the nature of which is incorporeal and immutable, to appear to mortal sight without any change in itself: to do so not in its own being, but by means of something subordinate to itself; and what is not subordinate to it? But those who say that one of those three was Christ do so because Abraham, seeing three men, addressed one of them as 'Lord' (for it is written 'And, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, and said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight', and so on).¹⁰³

¹⁰² Rom. 4, 19; Cf. Heb. 11, 12.

¹⁰³ Gen. 18, 2f.

Why, however, do they not notice that, while Abraham was still speaking to one of them, calling him 'Lord' and interceding with him not to destroy the righteous along with the wicked in Sodom, the other two had gone to destroy Sodom, and that, when Lot received these two, he also called each of them 'Lord' when he spoke to them? For he first spoke to them in the plural, and said, 'Behold, now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house',¹⁰⁴ and so too in the remainder of what is said in this passage. Later, however, we read as follows:

And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the Lord being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city. And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that they said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord. Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight,¹⁰⁵

and so on. Then, after these words, the Lord speaks in the singular in His reply, although he was in two angels, saying, 'Behold, I have marvelled at thy face',¹⁰⁶ and so on. Hence, it is much more credible that Abraham recognised the Lord in the persons of the three men, as also did Lot in two of them. For they spoke to Him in the singular even when they thought the three angels to be merely men and their only reason for taking them in was to minister to their wants as if they were mortals in need of refreshment. Clearly, there was something remarkable about them, so that, even though they seemed to be men, those who offered them hospitality could not doubt that the Lord was in them, as He is wont to be in the prophets. And it is for this reason that Abraham and Lot sometimes addressed them in the plural and sometimes, when speaking to the Lord in them, in the singular. That they were angels is attested by Scripture not only in the Book of Genesis, where these events are recounted, but also in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where, in praise

¹⁰⁴ Gen. 19,2.

¹⁰⁵ Gen. 19,16ff.

¹⁰⁶ Gen. 19,21 (LXX).

of hospitality, the apostle says, 'For thereby some have entertained angels unawares.'¹⁰⁷

By these three men, therefore, the divine promise was once more given to Abraham that he would have a son, Isaac, of Sarah; and it was given yet again when the Lord said, 'Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him.'¹⁰⁸ Here, then, were two promises, at once very brief and very full: the promise of the race of Israel according to the flesh, and of all nations according to faith.

30 Of the deliverance of Lot from Sodom and the destruction of that place by fire from heaven; and of Abimelech, whose lust could not harm Sarah's chastity

After this promise, when Lot had escaped from Sodom, there came down from heaven a torrent of fire, and the whole region of that ungodly city was turned to ashes. For it was a place where sexual intercourse between males had become so commonplace that it received the licence usually extended by the law to other practices. But these events were also a sample of the divine judgment to come. For why were those who were being delivered by the angels forbidden to look back, if not as a warning to us that, if we hope to evade the final judgment, we must not return in thought to the old life, which is shed when a man is reborn by grace? Again, Lot's wife remained, turned to salt, in the place where she had looked back, and thereby supplied the faithful with a seasoning of wisdom, as it were, so that they might beware of her example.¹⁰⁹

After this, in Gerar, while with Abimelech, the king of that city, Abraham employed the same subterfuge in relation to his wife as he had in Egypt; and, once more, she was restored to him untouched. There, indeed, when the king scolded him because he had remained silent as to the fact that she was his wife, and had called her his sister, Abraham revealed his fears, and added, 'And

¹⁰⁷ Heb. 13,2.

¹⁰⁸ Gen. 18,8.

¹⁰⁹ Gen. 19,24ff.

yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother.'¹¹⁰ For she was Abraham's sister by his father, through whom she was his kinswoman. Moreover, her beauty was such that she could be desired even in old age.

**31 Of the birth of Isaac, according to the promise,
whose name was given to him because of the
laughter of his parents**

After this, a son was born to Abraham by Sarah, according to God's promise; and he gave him the name Isaac, which means 'laughter'. For when this son was promised to him, his father laughed with astonished joy;¹¹¹ and when the promise was given again by the three men, his mother too had laughed, though with doubt as well as joy. However, when the angel rebuked her because her laughter, though it showed joy, did not show complete faith, she was afterwards made firm in her faith by that same angel. This, therefore, is how the boy received his name. And, indeed, when Isaac was born and given that name, Sarah showed that her laughter had been the laughter not of scornful mockery, but of joyful celebration, for she said, 'God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me.'¹¹² A very short time thereafter, however, the handmaid was cast out of the house with her son; and, according to the apostle, this signifies the two covenants, the old and the new, where Sarah stands for 'the Jerusalem which is above', that is, the City of God.¹¹³

**32 Of the obedience and faith of Abraham, tested by
the offering up of his son as a sacrifice; and of the
death of Sarah**

Among other things which it would take too long to recount in detail, Abraham was tempted with regard to the sacrifice of his most beloved son Isaac so that his pious obedience might be put to the proof, and be displayed not to God's knowledge, but to the world.

¹¹⁰ Gen. 20,12.

¹¹¹ Gen. 17,16.

¹¹² Gen. 21,6.

¹¹³ Cf. Gal. 4,22ff.

It is not true that every temptation is to be regretted; for that which enables the individual to prove himself is a matter for congratulation. Moreover, there is often no other way for the human soul to know itself than by trying its strength in answering not in word, but in deed, the questions posed by the experience of temptation. For then, if it acknowledges the favour of God, it is itself godly and established in the firmness of grace, not puffed up with idle boasting.

Abraham certainly did not ever believe that God takes delight in human victims; but he knew that when the thunder of a divine command is heard, we must obey without question. Moreover, Abraham is to be praised because he immediately believed that his son would rise again when he had been sacrificed. For when he had not wished to fulfil his wife's desire that the handmaid and her son should be expelled from the house, God had said to him, 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called.' Certainly, in the following verse it is said, 'And also of the son of the bondwoman I will make a nation, because he is thy seed.'¹¹⁴ How, therefore, are we to take the statement, 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called' when God also called Ishmael Abraham's seed? Expounding this, the apostle says: 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.'¹¹⁵ Thus, the children of the promise are called in Isaac to be the seed of Abraham: that is, they are called by grace and gathered together in Christ. The pious father therefore clung faithfully to this promise, and, since it was to be fulfilled through one whom God had ordered to be slain, he did not doubt that a son who could be granted to him when he was without hope of one could also be restored to him after he had been sacrificed.

This understanding is also found in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where it is expounded thus: 'By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead.' The apostle then adds, 'From whence also he received him in a figure.'¹¹⁶ But a figure of whom, if not of Him of

¹¹⁴ Gen. 21,12f.

¹¹⁵ Rom. 9,8.

¹¹⁶ Heb. 11,17ff.

Whom the apostle says, 'He spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all'?¹¹⁷ This is why, just as the Lord carried His cross, so Isaac himself bore to the place of sacrifice the wood on which he was to be laid. Moreover, when the father had been forbidden to strike his son after all, because it was not fitting that Isaac should be slain, who was the ram whose immolation completed the sacrifice when its blood was shed as a sign? Indeed, when Abraham saw it, it was caught in a thicket by its horns. Who, therefore, was pre-figured by it but Jesus, crowned with Jewish thorns before He was sacrificed?¹¹⁸

But let us now hear the divine words spoken by the angel. For the Scripture says:

And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham; and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.¹¹⁹

'Now I know' means 'Now I have made it known'; for it is not true that God did not know before. Then, when the ram had been sacrificed in place of his son Isaac, we read that 'Abraham called the name of that place, The Lord Saw: as it is said to this day, The Lord appeared on the mountain.'¹²⁰ Just as 'Now I know' meant 'Now I have made it known', so here 'The Lord Saw' means 'The Lord appeared', that is, made Himself visible.

And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said: By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Rom. 8,32.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Mark. 15,16f; John 19,1.

¹¹⁹ Gen. 22,10ff.

¹²⁰ Gen. 22,14.

¹²¹ Gen. 22,15ff.

In this way, after the whole burnt offering, in which Christ was signified, the calling of the nations in the seed of Abraham was confirmed by God's oath. For He had often given His promise, but never before had He taken an oath. But what is the oath of the true and truthful God but the confirmation of His promise, and a kind of rebuke to unbelievers?

After these things, Sarah died, when she was 127 years old and her husband was 137. He was ten years older than she, as he himself said when he was promised a son by her; for he said 'Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? And shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?'¹²² Abraham then bought a field, in which he buried his wife. According to Stephen's account,¹²³ it was then that Abraham became established in that land, since he now began to be a landowner there: that is, after the death of his father, who is reckoned to have died two years previously.

33 Of Rebekah, the granddaughter of Nahor, whom Isaac took as his wife

Then, when Isaac was forty years old – that is, when his father was 140, and three years after the death of his mother – he married Rebekah, the granddaughter of his uncle Nahor. But when the servant was sent by Isaac's father into Mesopotamia to fetch her, Abraham said to him, 'Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: and I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites.'¹²⁴ And what else does this show if not that the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, was presently to come in the flesh which was derived from that thigh? Are these any small signs of the foretelling of the truth which we now see fulfilled in Christ?

34 How we are to understand the fact that, after the death of Sarah, Abraham took Keturah as his wife

But what did Abraham mean by taking Keturah as his wife after Sarah's death? God forbid that we should suspect him of

¹²² Gen. 17,17.

¹²³ Acts. 7,4.

¹²⁴ Gen. 24,2f.

incontinence, especially in view of his age and the holiness of his faith. Was he, then, still seeking to procreate children, even though God had already given him, as His most solemn pledge, the promise that the increase of Isaac's children would be like the stars of heaven and the sands of the earth? If, however, as the apostle teaches,¹²⁵ Hagar and Ishmael signify the carnal people of the old covenant, why should not Keturah and her sons signify the carnal people who believe themselves to belong to the new covenant? For both Hagar and Keturah are called concubines of Abraham as well as wives, whereas Sarah is never spoken of as a concubine. For when Hagar was given to Abraham, it is written, 'And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.'¹²⁶ Again, of Keturah, whom Abraham took after the death of Sarah, we read: 'Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah.' Behold: both of them are called wives; but they are both also found to have been concubines, for the Scripture goes on to say, 'And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac; but unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, into the east country.'¹²⁷

The sons of the concubines, therefore, are not without gifts; but they do not come into the promised kingdom – neither the heretics nor the carnal Jews – because there is no heir save Isaac, and 'they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed', of whom the Scripture says, 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called.'¹²⁸ For I cannot see why Keturah, whom Abraham married after his wife's death, should be called a concubine, other than for the sake of this hidden meaning. But anyone who does not wish to take the passage in this sense must not condemn Abraham. For it may be that this story was provided in order to refute those heretics who would in time to come oppose second marriages.¹²⁹ For does not the example

¹²⁵ Gal. 4,24.

¹²⁶ Gen. 16,3.

¹²⁷ Gen. 25,1ff.

¹²⁸ Rom. 9,7f.

¹²⁹ Cf. Augustine, *Adv. Faust. Man.*, 32,17; *De haer.*, 26.

of the father of many nations himself demonstrate that a second marriage after the death of a wife is not a sin?

And Abraham died when he was 175 years old. Thus he left behind him his son Isaac, now seventy-five, whom he had begotten when he was a hundred years old.

35 Of the divine prophecy concerning Rebekah's twins while they were still in their mother's womb

We must now examine the temporal progress of the City of God through the posterity of Abraham. In the period between the first year of Isaac's life and his sixtieth year, in which his sons were born, a memorable event occurred. For when he asked God that his wife, who was barren, might bear a child, God granted his request, and she conceived, and the twins struggled together even while they were yet in her womb. Anxious at this disturbance, she went to inquire of the Lord, and she received this reply: 'Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy belly; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.'¹³⁰ The apostle Paul wishes this to be understood as a great proof of the grace of God.¹³¹ For when they were not yet born, and had not yet done any good works or bad, and when neither of them had committed any personal sin, and both were beyond doubt equal in respect of original sin, the younger was chosen without regard to merit, and the elder rejected.

But the plan of the work which I have undertaken does not permit me to speak of these things now; and I have in any case discussed them in many other places.¹³² But as for the statement, 'The elder shall serve the younger', almost no one of our persuasion has understood this to mean anything other than that the older people, the Jews, is to serve the younger people, the Christians. This prophecy might seem, indeed, to have been fulfilled in the nation of the Idumaeans, which was descended from the elder son,

¹³⁰ Gen. 25,23.

¹³¹ Cf. Rom. 9,11ff.

¹³² Cf., e.g., *Expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistula ad Romanos*, 60; *Ad Simplicianum*, 1,2.

who had two names (for he was called both Esau and Edom:¹³³ hence 'Idumaeans'). For the Idumaeans were later to be overcome by the people descended from younger son, that is, by the Israelites, and made subject to them. It is, however, more fitting to believe that some greater prophetic meaning is intended by the statement, 'The elder shall serve the younger.' And what is this meaning if not that which is now evidently being fulfilled in the Jews and the Christians?¹³⁴

36 Of the oracle and blessing which Isaac, beloved because of his father's merits, received exactly as his father had

Isaac also received an oracle of the same kind as his father had received on several occasions. Of this oracle, it is written:

And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar. And the Lord appeared unto him and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swear unto Abraham thy father; and I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.¹³⁵

This patriarch had no other wife, nor any concubine; he was content to have as his posterity the two twins procreated in one act of intercourse. (When he dwelt among strangers, Isaac too feared that peril might arise because of the beauty of his wife, and he did what his father had done: he said that Rebekah was his sister, and remained silent as to the fact that she was his wife. She was, indeed, his kinswoman by blood on both his father's side and his mother's. But she, too, remained unmolested by strangers when it became

¹³³ Cf. Gen. 25,30.

¹³⁴ Cf. Augustine, *Quaest in Hept.*, 1,72; *Confess.*, 7,9,15.

¹³⁵ Gen. 26,1ff.

known that she was his wife.) We should not, however, esteem Isaac more highly than his father merely because he knew no woman other than his one wife. For it is beyond doubt that the merits of his father's faith and obedience were greater than his own, inasmuch as God says that it is for Abraham's sake that He will do to Isaac that good which He did him. 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed', He says, 'because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws'. Again, He says in another oracle, 'I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake.'¹³⁶

Let us, then, understand that Abraham did indeed behave chastely, even though he is believed to have acted out of lust by impure men who seek a justification for their own wickedness in the Holy Scriptures. Also, let us learn from this not to compare men's worth by their single good deeds, but to consider all their qualities together. For it may be that one man has some quality in his life and morals in which he surpasses another, and which far outweighs some other quality in which he, in turn, is surpassed by that other. According to this wholesome and true principle of judgment, even though continence is to be preferred to marriage, a married man who has faith is nonetheless better than the continent man who is faithless. Indeed, the faithless man is not merely less praiseworthy, but especially worthy of execration. Let us assume that both are good men: even so the married man who is wholly faithful and obedient is better than the continent man of less faith and less obedience; whereas, if other things were equal, who would doubt that that the continent man is to be preferred to the married one?

37 Of those things which are mystically prefigured in Esau and Jacob

So Isaac's two sons, Esau and Jacob, grew up together. The primacy of the elder was transferred to the younger by a pact and agreement between them, because of the elder son's immoderate longing for the dish of lentils which the younger had prepared for his meal;

¹³⁶ Gen. 26,24.

and, having taken his oath, he sold his birthright to his brother for this price.¹³⁷ Let us learn from this, therefore, that it is not the kind of food that we eat which brings disgrace upon us, but our unrestrained greed for it. Isaac was old, and his eyes had grown dim with age. He wished to bless his older son and, without knowing it, he blessed his younger son instead of the elder brother, who was a hairy man; for the younger son placed his father's hands upon him, with the skins of the kids fastened to himself, as if bearing the sins of another. But, lest we should suppose this device of Jacob's to have been a fraudulent deception, and so fail to comprehend the great truth which it symbolises, the Scripture first says: 'Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents.'¹³⁸ Some of our translators have rendered 'plain' here as 'without guile'; but whether the Greek word *aplastos* means 'without deceit' or 'plain' or – better – 'without pretence', what deceit is there is in the obtaining of a blessing by a man 'without deceit'?¹³⁹ What deceit is there in a plain man? What pretence is there in a man who tells no lies, unless there is here a profound and mysterious truth? And what was the nature of the blessing itself? Isaac says:

See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed: therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and an abundance of corn and wine: let the nations serve thee, and princes bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy father's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee.¹⁴⁰

In the blessing of Jacob, therefore, is foreshadowed the proclamation of Christ to all the nations which is now being accomplished and performed.

Isaac is the Law and the Prophets; and Christ is blessed by the Law and the Prophets, even by the mouths of the Jews, as by one who knows not what he does because the Law and the Prophets are themselves not understood. The world is filled like a field with the

¹³⁷ Gen. 25,29ff.

¹³⁸ Gen. 25,27.

¹³⁹ For further attempts to develop this wretched argument, see Augustine, *Quaest. in Hept.*, 1,74; *Serm.* 4,16ff.

¹⁴⁰ Gen. 27,27ff.

fragrance of the name of Christ. His is the blessing of the dew of heaven, that is, of the showers of divine words; and of the fatness of the earth, that is, of the gathering of the peoples. His is the abundance of corn and wine, that is, the multitude which the corn and wine have gathered together in the sacrament of His body and blood. It is Christ Whom the nations serve, and to Whom princes bow down. He is Lord over His brethren, since His people have dominion over the Jews. It is He to Whom the sons of His Father bow down, that is, the sons of Abraham according to faith; for He Himself is also a son of Abraham according to the flesh. He who has cursed Him is cursed; he who has blessed Him is blessed. Our Christ, I say, is blessed, that is, He is truly spoken of, even by the mouths of the Jews, who still recite the Law and the Prophets even though they err, and even though, in their error, they suppose that another, to whom they look forward, is blessed.

Behold: when his elder son asks for the promised blessing, Isaac is appalled to learn that he has blessed another in his stead. He is amazed, and wishes to know who this other is; yet he does not complain that he has been deceived. On the contrary: the great mystery is revealed to him at once, in his heart, and he foregoes indignation and confirms his blessing. He says: 'Who, therefore, is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? Yea, and he shall be blessed.'⁴¹ Who would not expect the curse of an angry man here, if these things had taken place according to earthly standards rather than by inspiration from on high? Oh, these were real events, but they were prophetic also: earthly, but heavenly too; human, but divine! And if we were to investigate all their aspects, so fruitful of great mystery, we should fill many volumes. But it is necessary to set a reasonable limit to the scope of this work; and this compels us to hasten on to other things.

⁴¹ Gen. 27,33.

38 Of the sending of Jacob into Mesopotamia to take a wife; and of the vision that he saw in a dream on his journey; and of his four women, even though he had sought only one wife

Jacob was sent by his parents into Mesopotamia, to bring back a wife thence. His father dispatched him with these words:

Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother. And may God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee; and thou shalt become a multitude of people. And may God give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave to Abraham.¹⁴²

Here, we now understand that Jacob's seed is to be set apart from the other seed of Isaac which is derived through Esau. For when it was said, 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called',¹⁴³ this clearly referred to the seed belonging to the City of God, from whom the other seed of Abraham, derived through the son of the handmaid, and later also through the sons of Keturah, was to be set apart. But there was still a doubt concerning the two twin sons of Isaac, whether the blessing belonged to both of them, or to only one, and, if to only one, which of them it was. This was finally resolved, however, when Jacob was prophetically blessed by his father, who said to him, 'and thou shalt become a multitude of people; and may God give thee the blessing of Abraham'.

Now as Jacob journeyed into Mesopotamia, he received an oracle in a dream, of which it is written:

And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of

¹⁴² Gen. 28,1ff.

¹⁴³ Gen. 21,12.

God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Beth-el.¹⁴⁴

This was an act to which prophetic significance belongs. When Jacob poured oil over the stone he was not committing idolatry, as if making a god of it; for he did not bow down to the stone, or sacrifice to it. Rather, this was a symbolic act conveying a great mystery; for the name 'Christ' is derived from 'chrism', which means 'anointing'. As for the ladder, we know that the Saviour Himself recalls this to our memory in the Gospel. For He says of Nathaniel, 'Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!'¹⁴⁵ – for it was Israel, that is, Jacob, who saw that vision; and then, in the same place, He says: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'¹⁴⁶

Jacob therefore journeyed into Mesopotamia, to take a wife there. But, as the Divine Scripture shows, it came to pass that he had four women from that place,¹⁴⁷ by whom he produced twelve sons and one daughter; yet he felt no unlawful desire for any of them. He had indeed come there to take only one wife; but when another woman was substituted for her by deceit, and he unwittingly made use of the other woman during the night, he did not then dismiss

¹⁴⁴ Gen. 28,10ff.

¹⁴⁵ John 1,47.

¹⁴⁶ John 1,51.

¹⁴⁷ Gen. 29–30.

the latter, lest he should seem to make a laughing-stock of her. At that time, however, because it was necessary to multiply offspring, the law did not prohibit a man from having several wives; and so Jacob took the first woman also, to whom he had already pledged himself that he would make her his wife. She, however, was barren; and so she gave her handmaid to her husband, so that she might have children by her. The elder sister also did this, even though she had already borne children, because she desired to multiply her offspring. We do not read that Jacob asked for any other women but the one, nor that he made use of any save for the sake of begetting offspring. Also, he preserved his marriage vow; for he would not have acted as he did had not his wives urged him to do so; for wives then had legitimate power over the bodies of their husbands.¹⁴⁸ Thus, Jacob begat twelve sons and one daughter by four women. Then he went down into Egypt because of his son Joseph, who was sold by his jealous brothers and taken thence, where he became a person of consequence.

39 For what reason Jacob was also given the surname 'Israel'

Now, as I said a little while ago, Jacob was also called Israel; and this is the name generally borne by the people who are his progeny. This name was bestowed upon him by the angel who wrestled with him on his return journey from Mesopotamia; and it is very evident that this angel represents a type of Christ. For the fact that Jacob prevailed over him – and the angel allowed this to happen, of course, for the sake of the symbolism – signifies the passion of Christ, in which the Jews seemed to prevail over Him. Yet Jacob received a blessing from that same angel whom he had overcome; for the giving of the name was the blessing. Now 'Israel' means 'Seeing God'; and to see God will be the reward of all the saints when the end comes. Moreover, the angel also touched his apparent conqueror in the hollow of his thigh, and in that way made him lame.¹⁴⁹ One and the same man, therefore, Jacob, was both blessed and lame: blessed in those who, among this same people of Israel,

¹⁴⁸ Cf. 1 Cor. 7,4.

¹⁴⁹ Gen. 32,24ff.

have believed in Christ, and lame in those who have not believed. For the hollow of his thigh signifies the multitude of his race and, indeed, it is to the greater part of that stock that the prophetic warning is given: 'They have limped away from their ways.'¹⁵⁰

40 How it is that Jacob is said to have entered Egypt with seventy-five souls, even though most of those mentioned were born at a later time

It is said that there went down with Jacob into Egypt seventy-five souls, counting himself and his sons.¹⁵¹ In that number, only two women are mentioned, one a daughter and the other a granddaughter. But a diligent examination of the facts does not indicate that Jacob's progeny amounted to so great a number in the day or year when he entered Egypt. Indeed, even the great-grandsons of Joseph are recorded in that number, and these could not by any means have been alive then; for Jacob was then 130 years old and his son Joseph was thirty-nine. For it is well known that Joseph took a wife when he was thirty years old or more. How, then, could he have had great-grandsons within nine years from the sons whom that wife bore him? Indeed, when Jacob came down into Egypt, he found Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, as boys of less than nine years old, who could not, therefore, have had sons of their own. How is it, then, that not only their sons, but even their grandsons, are numbered among the seventy-five souls who went down into Egypt at that time with Jacob? For Machir, the son of Manasseh and Joseph's grandson, is mentioned there; so is Machir's son Galaad, Manasseh's grandson and Joseph's great-grandson. Also mentioned is the son begotten by Joseph's other son, Ephraim: that is Utalaam, Joseph's grandson; and so is Edom, the son of this Utalaam, who was Ephraim's grandson and Joseph's great-grandson. These people could by no means have been alive when Jacob went down into Egypt and found their grandfathers, Joseph's sons and his own grandsons, as boys of less than nine years old.

But when Scripture records the entry of Jacob into Egypt with seventy-five persons, no doubt this took place not on one day or in

¹⁵⁰ Psalm 18,45.

¹⁵¹ Gen. 46,26f (LXX); Acts 7,14.

one year, but during the whole time that Joseph, who caused his father to come down into Egypt, was alive. For the same Scripture speaks thus of Joseph himself: 'And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house: and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years. And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation.' 'The third generation from Ephraim is Joseph's great-grandson. For 'the third generation' clearly means son, grandson and great-grandson. The Scripture then goes on, 'the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought up upon Joseph's knees'.¹⁵² Even though the plural is here used, this is a reference to the grandson of Manasseh and the great-grandson of Joseph. For this usage is commonly found in Scripture, as when Jacob's only daughter is called 'the daughters'. Indeed, in Latin also we often speak of 'sons' even where there is no more than one child.¹⁵³

Joseph's felicity is here proclaimed, therefore, in the fact that he was able to see his great-grandsons. But we must by no means suppose that those great-grandsons were already alive when their great-grandfather Joseph was only thirty-nine years old, at the time when his father Jacob came to him in Egypt. This is something which those who do not study the matter diligently enough fail to see. For it is written: 'And these are the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt with their father Jacob.' Seventy-five souls, including Jacob, are then enumerated at once; but this does not mean that they were all together at the time when Jacob went down into Egypt. As I have said, their entry took place during the whole lifetime of Joseph, who is seen to have made that entry possible.

41 Of the blessing promised by Jacob to his son Judah

With regard to the people of Christ, then, in whom the City of God is on pilgrimage in this world: if we examine the account given of Christ's fleshly ancestry in the seed of Abraham, we find that the sons of Abraham's concubines are set aside in favour of Isaac. As to the seed of Isaac, we find that Esau, who is Edom, is set aside in

¹⁵² Gen. 50,22f.

¹⁵³ Cf. Gen. 46,7; Aulus Gellius, *Noct. Att.*, 2,13. See also Deut. 6,7; 1 Tim. 3,4; 5,4.

favour of Jacob, who is Israel. And when we come to the seed of Israel himself, we find that his other sons are set aside in favour of Judah; for it was from the tribe of Judah that Christ was born. For this reason we should give ear to the blessing which Israel prophetically bestowed upon his son Judah when, as he lay dying in Egypt, he blessed his sons. He said:

Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hands shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up. He shall lie down and sleep as a lion, or a lion's whelp; who shall rouse him up? A prince shall not be lacking from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until these things come which have been laid up for him; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes: his eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.¹⁵⁴

I have already expounded these verses in my work against Faustus the Manichæan;¹⁵⁵ and I think that the truth of this prophecy is in any case clear enough. Here, in the mention of sleeping, Christ's death is foretold; and the title 'Lion' indicates that He died by His own power, and not of necessity. He himself announces this power in the Gospel, saying, 'I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.'¹⁵⁶ Thus the Lion roared; thus He fulfilled what He said. For the words which come next also refer to His power, and speak of His resurrection: 'Who shall rouse him up?' – that is, no man will do so, except Himself. For He said of His own body, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'¹⁵⁷ Again, the manner of His death – that is, by being raised up on the Cross – is expressed in a single word, when it is said, 'thou art gone up' [*ascendisti*]; and the words which come next, 'He shall lie down and sleep', are explained by the evangelist when he says, 'He bowed His head and

¹⁵⁴ Gen. 49,8ff.

¹⁵⁵ *Adv. Faust. Man.*, 12,42.

¹⁵⁶ John 10,18.

¹⁵⁷ John 2,19.

gave up the ghost.¹⁵⁸ Or perhaps they refer to His sepulchre, in which He lay down and slept; and no man roused him up thence, as the prophets raised some persons, or as he Himself raised others: He roused Himself, as if from sleep.

Moreover, the garments which He washes in wine are the sins which He washes away with His blood; and the baptised know the sacrament of that blood. And when Israel adds, 'and his clothes in the blood of grapes', what are these clothes but the Church? Again, 'his eyes shall be red with wine' signifies those spiritual men who are made drunk with His cup, of which the psalmist sings: 'And Thy cup, which maketh me drunk, how wonderful it is!'¹⁵⁹ 'And his teeth white with milk' refers to the milk that infants drink, as the apostle says: that is, nourishing words, when they are not yet able to take solid food.¹⁶⁰ Thus it is Christ Himself in Whom the promises made to Judah 'have been laid up'; and 'until these things come' to fulfilment, princes from that stock – that is, kings of Israel – have never been lacking. 'And unto him shall the gathering of the people be': the meaning of this is already clearer than any explanation could make it.

42 Of the two sons of Joseph, whom Jacob blessed by a prophetic crossing of his hands

Isaac's two sons, then, Esau and Jacob, furnish us with a symbol of the two peoples, the Jews and the Christians (although, as far as carnal descent is concerned, it is not the Jews who come from the seed of Esau, but the Idumaeans; and it is not the race of Christians who come from Jacob, but the Jews; for the symbol extends only as far as the words 'and the elder shall serve the younger'). And the same symbolism is accomplished in the two sons of Joseph; for the elder typifies the Jews and the younger the Christians. When Jacob blessed them, putting his right hand on the younger, whom he had on his left side, and his left hand on the elder, whom he had on his right, this seemed to Joseph to be a grave mistake, and he admonished his father, as if to correct his error and show him which of

¹⁵⁸ John 19,30.

¹⁵⁹ Psalm 23,5 (LXX).

¹⁶⁰ 1 Cor 3,2.

them was the elder. But his father refused to change his hands, and said, 'I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.'¹⁶¹ Here, then, two promises are given: a people to one son, and a multitude of nations to the other. What could be more evident than that, by those two promises, the people of Israel and the whole world are contained in the seed of Abraham: the former according to the flesh, and the latter according to faith?

**43 Of the times of Moses, Joshua the son of Nun,
the judges and the kings, of whom Saul was the first
king but David the most important, both for his
deeds and as a symbol**

After the death of Jacob, and after the death of Joseph, for the remaining 144 years until their Exodus from the land of Egypt, the race of Israel increased in an incredible fashion, even though worn down by persecutions, which at one point extended even to the slaughter of the male children born to them, because the Egyptians marvelled at the great increase of that people, and feared it.¹⁶² At that time, Moses was secretly rescued from the clutches of those who were slaying the infants, and taken to the king's house; for God was preparing to accomplish great things through him. He was reared and adopted by the daughter of Pharaoh¹⁶³ (the title 'Pharaoh' was borne by all the kings of Egypt) and grew into so great a man that he delivered that nation, so wondrously multiplied, from the most harsh and grievous yoke of servitude which they bore there. Or, rather, they were delivered through him by the God Who had promised Abraham that He would do this.

Moses had, indeed, formerly fled from Egypt; for, in defending an Israelite, he had slain an Egyptian and was terrified.¹⁶⁴ But, then, divinely sent, he overcame the resistance of Pharaoh's sorcerers by the power of God's spirit. At that time, through his agency, ten

¹⁶¹ Gen. 48,19.

¹⁶² Exod. 1,7ff.

¹⁶³ Exod. 2,5ff.

¹⁶⁴ Exod. 2,11ff.

memorable plagues were inflicted on the Egyptians, when they refused to let God's people go. Water was turned to blood; there were frogs, lice and flies; the cattle died; there came boils, hail, locusts, darkness, and the death of the first-born. Finally, when the Egyptians, broken by so many dreadful plagues, had at last released the Israelites, they were themselves drowned in the Red Sea as they gave chase. For the sea had divided to make a path for the departing Israelites; but, as the Egyptians pursued them, the waters returned and overwhelmed them.¹⁶⁵

After this, God's people dwelt in the wilderness for forty years, with Moses as their leader. During this time, the 'Tabernacle of the Testimony' received its name, where God was worshipped with sacrifices which foreshadowed things to come.¹⁶⁶ This occurred after the Law had been given on the mountain: with great splendour, for the divine presence was most evidently attested there by wondrous signs and sounds.¹⁶⁷ This came to pass shortly after the Exodus from Egypt, when the people were beginning to dwell in the wilderness, on the fiftieth day after the paschal feast had been celebrated by the sacrifice of a lamb.¹⁶⁸ This lamb is a type of Christ, foretelling that through the sacrifice of His passion He would pass over from this world to the Father (for 'pasch' is the Hebrew for 'passover'). So complete is this symbolism that, when the new covenant was revealed after Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed, it was on the fiftieth day that the Holy Spirit came down from Heaven.¹⁶⁹ The Spirit is called in the Gospel, 'the finger of God',¹⁷⁰ to recall to our minds that first foreshadowing, when, it is said, the tables of the law were written by the finger of God.¹⁷¹

When Moses died, Joshua the son of Nun ruled the people; and he brought them into the promised land and divided it among that same people.¹⁷² Wars were waged, with wondrous success, by these two wondrous leaders; although God attests that these victories came to them not because of the merits of the Hebrew people, but

¹⁶⁵ Exod. 7-12; 14, *passim*.

¹⁶⁶ Exod. 25,8-27, 21.

¹⁶⁷ Exod. 24,16ff.

¹⁶⁸ Exod. 12,1ff.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Acts 2,1ff.

¹⁷⁰ Luke, 11,20.

¹⁷¹ Exod. 31,18.

¹⁷² Josh. 1, *passim*.

because of the sins of those whom they overcame. And after those two leaders, when the people were by now established in the promised land, there were judges. Thus, God's first promise to Abraham now began to be fulfilled, in one people, the Hebrew nation, and in the land of Canaan. Its fulfilment did not, however, yet extend to all nations and to the whole world. This was to come with the advent of Christ in the flesh, and not by the keeping of the old Law, but by the faith of the Gospel. This was prefigured in the fact that the people were led into the promised land not by Moses, who had received the Law for the people on Mount Sinai, but by Joshua, whose name had, indeed, been changed at God's command, so that he should be called Jesus.¹⁷³ In the time of the judges, however, success in war alternated with failure, according to the sins of the people and the mercy of God.

Then comes the time of the kings, of whom the first to reign was Saul. When he was discarded and fell in a calamitous battle, and his whole stock was rejected so that kings should not come forth from it, David succeeded to the kingdom;¹⁷⁴ and 'Son of David' is a principal title of Christ. David marks the point, as it were, at which God's people begins to come of age. For we may regard the time between Abraham and David as the adolescence of this nation; nor is it without significance that the evangelist Matthew records the genealogy of Christ in such a way as to assign fourteen generations to this first stage: that is, to the period between Abraham and David.¹⁷⁵ For it is at adolescence that a man begins to be able to beget offspring; and it is for this reason that the list of the generations takes its origin from Abraham, who was indeed established as the 'father of nations' when he received his change of name. Before that time the people of God was in its childhood, as it were: a childhood extending from Noah down to Abraham himself. This is why we find a language – that is, Hebrew – at that time. For it is in childhood that a man begins to speak: after infancy, which is

¹⁷³ See Num. 13,16: 'And Moses called Oshea the son of Nun Jehoshua.' Jehoshua or Joshua is given as *Iesous* in Greek and *Iesus* in Latin translations of the Old Testament. This is why Joshua is almost always referred to in Latin as *Iesus Nave*, 'Joshua the son of Nun', to distinguish him from the Jesus of the New Testament.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. 1 Sam. 15,26; 31,1ff; 2 Sam. 5,1ff.

¹⁷⁵ Matt. 1,17.

so called because infants do not have the power of speech.¹⁷⁶ And this first age of infancy is sunk in oblivion, just as the first age of the human race was obliterated by the Flood. For how many men are there who have any recollection of their infancy?

Thus, just as the previous book dealt with the first age of the development of the City of God, so this present book contains an account of the second and third ages. In the third age, as signified by the three-year-old heifer, the three-year-old goat and the three-year-old ram, the yoke of the Law was imposed, an abundance of sinners appeared, and the earthly kingdom had its beginning. Yet there was nonetheless no lack of spiritual men, who were prefigured in the sign of the turtle-dove and the pigeon.

¹⁷⁶ *Infans* = 'speechless'

Book xvii

1 Of the age of the prophets

We have learned that, in keeping with the promises made to him by God, it was from the seed of Abraham that the Israelite nation took its origin according to the flesh, while all nations take their origin from him according to faith; and the progress of the City of God through the ages will show how these promises are being fulfilled. Since, therefore, the previous book dealt with the period down to the end of David's reign, we shall now touch on other events which followed that reign, in so far as seems sufficient for the work that we have undertaken.

We come now, therefore, to the period extending from when the holy Samuel began to prophesy, down to the time when the people of Israel were led away captive into Babylon, and then to the point, seventy years later, when, after the return of the Israelites, the house of God was restored according to the prophecy of the holy Jeremiah.¹ The whole of this time is the age of the prophets. We can, of course, without impropriety give the name of prophet to Noah himself, in whose days the whole earth was destroyed by the Flood; and to others also, both before and after him, down to the time when there began to be kings among the people of God. For certain future events pertaining to the City of God and the kingdom of heaven were in a certain manner symbolised or foretold by these persons; and not a few of them, indeed – Abraham and Moses, for example – were, as we read, expressly given this title.² The expression, 'the days of the prophets', is, however, used especially and chiefly with reference to the period beginning with the prophesying of Samuel, who, at God's bidding, first anointed Saul to the kingdom and then, when Saul was rejected, David himself, from whose stock came the whole remaining succession of kings, for as long as it was fitting for there to be such a succession.

It would, however, be an immense task if I were to give an account of all that the prophets foretold of Christ during this time, while the City of God was running its course and its members died

¹ Cf. Jer. 25, 11.

² Cf. Gen. 20, 7; Deut. 34, 10.

and new ones were born. For, on the face of it, Scripture merely records the history of the successive kings, and their deeds and what befell them; yet, if we diligently examine what it relates with the help of God's Spirit, we shall see that it is more concerned – or at any rate not less concerned – with foretelling the future than with recording the past. And who is there who, when he gives even moderate thought to the matter, does not see what a laborious and boundless task it would be, needing many volumes, to identify, and to expound by discussing them, all the instances of this? Moreover, even those passages which are unambiguously prophecies relating to Christ and the kingdom of heaven, which is the City of God, are so numerous that it would require a more extensive discussion to make them known than the scope of this work permits. Accordingly, therefore, I shall restrain my pen as far as I can, so as neither to say anything superfluous, nor to omit anything necessary, to the completion of this work according to God's will.

**2 At what time God's promise was fulfilled
concerning the land of Canaan, which even carnal
Israel received as its possession**

In the previous book, we said that two things were promised by God to Abraham from the beginning. The first was that his seed should possess the land of Canaan; and this is signified where it is said, 'Go into a land that I will shew thee; and I will make of thee a great nation.'³ But the other, and by far the greater, promise, concerned not his carnal, but his spiritual seed, by which he is the father not of the one Israelite nation, but of all the nations which follow in the footsteps of his faith. This promise begins with the words, 'In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.'⁴ And we have shown by the testimony of many passages that these two promises were fulfilled in full measure. Thus, Abraham's seed according to the flesh – that is, the people of Israel – were now in the promised land and had begun to rule there, not only by holding and possessing the cities of their adversaries, but also by having kings. The promises of God concerning this people had, therefore, already been

³ Gen. 12,1f.

⁴ Gen. 12,3.

to a great degree fulfilled: not only the promise made to the three patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the other promises made during their time, but also those given through Moses, by whom that same people was redeemed from slavery in Egypt, and through whom all the promises of the past were revealed, when he led the people through the wilderness.

The people were led into the promised land by Joshua the son of Nun, who overcame the nations of that land and divided it among the twelve tribes, as God had commanded. Then, however, he died; and God's promise – the promise concerning the land of Canaan stretching from a certain river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates⁵ – was fulfilled neither in him nor during the whole time of the judges who came after him. Yet this was no longer a prophecy to be fulfilled in time to come; rather, its immediate fulfilment was awaited. And its fulfilment indeed came about through David and his son Solomon, whose kingdom was extended over all the land in respect of which the promise had been given. For they subdued all those people and made them tributary nations.⁶ Thus, under those kings, the seed of Abraham according to the flesh was established in the promised land: that is, in the land of Canaan. And so nothing more remained to complete the fulfilment of God's promise concerning that land. The Hebrew nation might remain in that same land in an untroubled state, as far as temporal prosperity was concerned, throughout all the succession of generations down to the end of this mortal age, provided only that they obeyed the laws of the Lord their God. But since God already knew that they would not do this, He indeed imposed temporal punishments on them. He did this both to test the few faithful men of that nation, and to admonish those who were to come in future times among all the nations: an admonition fit for those in whom He was to fulfil His second promise by the revelation of the new covenant in the incarnation of Christ.

⁵ Gen. 15,18.

⁶ 1 Kings 4,21.

3 Of the threefold meanings of the prophets,
referring sometimes to the earthly Jerusalem,
sometimes to the Heavenly City, and sometimes to
both at once

Now the divine oracles given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the other prophetic signs or utterances recorded earlier in the sacred writings, refer partly to the people of Abraham according to the flesh, and partly to those of his seed in whom all nations are blessed as co-heirs of Christ through the new covenant: blessed in the possession of eternal life and the kingdom of heaven. And the same is true of the rest of the prophecies, given during the time of the kings. Thus, these prophecies refer partly to the handmaid whose children were born into slavery - that is, to the earthly Jerusalem, who is in slavery with her sons; but they also refer partly to the free City of God: that is, to the true Jerusalem, eternal in heaven, whose sons are the men who live according to God in their pilgrimage on earth. There are, however, certain prophecies which we are to understand as referring to both: to the handmaid literally, and to the free woman figuratively.

The utterances of the prophets are therefore found to be of three kinds; for some have reference to the earthly Jerusalem, others to the heavenly, and some of them have reference to both. But I see that I must prove what I say by examples. Nathan the prophet was sent to reproach King David with a grave sin, and to foretell the future evils which were to ensue.⁷ And who can doubt that these utterances and others of the same kind had reference to the earthly city? This is so whether they were made publicly, that is, uttered for the salvation and advantage of the people, or privately, as when the divine eloquence imparted a knowledge of future things to some individual person, for the advantage of his own temporal life. On the other hand, we read such a passage as the following:

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was

⁷ 2 Sam. 12, 1ff.

an husband unto them, saith the Lord: but this shall be the covenant that I shall make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

Without doubt, this is a prophecy concerning Jerusalem on high, whose reward is God Himself, and whose supreme and entire good lies in possessing God and being possessed by Him.

But when Jerusalem is called the City of God and it is said that the House of God is to be built there, a twofold reference is intended. For, on the one hand, this prophecy is seen to have been fulfilled when King Solomon built his most noble temple there. But this was not only an event in the history of the earthly Jerusalem: it was also a sign of the heavenly Jerusalem. Now this kind of prophecy, in which both kinds of reference are as it were compounded and mixed together, is of great significance in the ancient canonical books which contain an account of historical events; and it has exercised, and continues to exercise, the ingenuity of those who study the sacred writings. Thus, when we read of prophecy and its fulfilment in the history of Abraham's seed according to the flesh, we also seek an allegorical meaning which is to be fulfilled in Abraham's seed according to faith. Indeed, some have been so much concerned to do this that they believe that nothing prophesied and performed in those books, or performed without being prophesied, is without some figurative meaning which is to be referred to the City of God in heaven, and to the sons of that City who are pilgrims in this life. If this is so, then the utterances of the prophets will be of two kinds only, and not three: or, rather, this will be true of all those Scriptures which are included under the title of the Old Testament. For if everything said of Jerusalem in the Old Testament, or fulfilled there in relation to it, has reference, by prophetic allegory, to the Heavenly Jerusalem, there will be nothing there which refers only to the earthly Jerusalem. And so there will be only two kinds of prophecy: one referring to the free Jerusalem, and the other referring to both cities.

Certainly, it seems to me that he errs greatly who thinks that none of the events recorded in writings of this kind has any

* Jer. 31,31ff, cf Heb. 8,8ff.

significance beyond the merely historical; but, then again, he is just as rash who contends that every statement found there is wrapped in allegorical meaning. This is why I have said that prophecy is of three kinds, not two. Although this is my belief, however, I do not condemn those who have been able to arrive at a spiritual meaning for every historical episode: provided, of course, that they have preserved the primary historical truth. Again, there are other statements which cannot readily be made to apply to events either human or divine, past or future; yet which of the faithful would think that such things were spoken in vain? Who would not understand them in a spiritual sense if he could, or at least confess that they should be so interpreted by anyone who can to do so?

4 Of the prophetic change in the Israelite kingship and priesthood; and of the things prophesied by Hannah, Samuel's mother, who is a symbol of the Church

The City of God, therefore, pursued its course down to the time of the kings: down to the time when Saul was rejected and David first obtained the kingship, so that his posterity thereafter reigned in the earthly Jerusalem in long succession. These events were symbolic, signifying and foretelling something which we must not pass over in silence. For they foreshadowed the change which was to take place in the future with respect to the two covenants, the old and the new: the transformation of priesthood and kingship brought about by the new and everlasting priest-king Who is Christ Jesus. For when Eli the priest was rejected, and Samuel was substituted for him in the service of God, and performed the offices of priest and judge simultaneously; and when Saul was cast down and King David established in the kingdom: these events prefigured the change of which I have spoken.

Also, Samuel's mother Hannah, who had formerly been barren but then rejoiced in her fruitfulness, seems to prophesy exactly the same transformation, when, exulting, she pours forth her gratitude to the Lord. For when she gives back to God the same child, after he had been born and weaned, with the same piety with which she made her vow, she says:

My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in Thy salvation. There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside Thee: neither is there any rock like our God. Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and a God Who prepares His own designs. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full of bread have been reduced to want, and the hungry have passed over the earth. The barren hath borne seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: He bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dung-hill, to set them among the princes of the people, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for He giveth strength to him that maketh a vow. He hath blessed the years of the righteous, for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversary of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; the Lord is holy. Let the prudent man not glory in his prudence, nor the mighty man glory in his might, nor the rich man glory in his riches. He who glories, let him glory in this: to understand and know the Lord, and to do justice and righteousness in the midst of the earth. The Lord has gone up into the heavens and has thundered; He Himself shall judge the ends of the earth, because He is just; and He shall give strength unto our kings, and exalt the horn of His anointed.⁹

Are we really to suppose that these are only the words of a little woman giving thanks for the birth of her son? Are men's minds so turned away from the light of truth that they do not perceive that the words poured out by this woman go beyond that? Can anyone who hears these words, and who is properly moved by the things which have now begun to be fulfilled even in this earthly pilgrimage, not see and acknowledge that through this woman (whose very name, Hannah, means 'God's grace') there speaks the Christian religion itself, the City of God itself, whose King and Founder is Christ? Through her, indeed, there speaks, by the spirit of prophecy, the grace of God itself, from which the proud are estranged so

⁹ 1 Sam. 2,1ff (LXX); cf. Jer. 9,23f.

that they fall, and by which the humble are filled so that they rise: the grace which, in the highest degree, resounds throughout her hymn.

But perhaps someone will indeed say that this woman spoke not in prophecy, but in praise of God, declaring her gratitude for the son given in answer to her prayer. If this is so, however, what did she intend to express when she said, 'The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full of bread have been reduced to want, and the hungry have passed over the earth. The barren hath borne seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble'? For had she herself borne seven, though she was barren? She had only one child when she spoke these words; and even afterwards she did not bear seven – or six, with whom Samuel would have made the seventh – but three sons and two daughters. Moreover, her closing words were as follows, spoken at a time when no one yet reigned over that people: 'He shall give strength unto our kings, and exalt the horn of His anointed.' Why should she say this, if not by way of prophecy?

Let the Church of Christ speak, therefore: the 'City of the great King', full of grace and fruitful of offspring. Let the Church speak the words which, as she acknowledges, were spoken of her long ago by the mouth of this pious mother, 'My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord.' Her heart indeed rejoices, and her horn is exalted indeed; not in herself, however, but in the Lord her God. 'My mouth is enlarged over mine enemies' because even in the distress of oppression, even when its heralds are bound, 'the word of God is not bound'.¹⁰ 'I rejoice', she says, 'in Thy salvation'. This salvation is Christ Jesus; for, as we read in the Gospel, Simeon took Him up in his arms, an old man embracing a little child and acknowledging Him to be great, and said, 'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.'¹¹ Thus, let the Church say, 'I rejoice in Thy salvation. There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside Thee.' For He is holy, and He sanctifies; He is just, and He justifies. 'There is none holy as the Lord', for no one is made holy without Him. Then come the following words: 'Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let

¹⁰ 2 Tim. 2,9.

¹¹ Luke 2,29f.

not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge.' He Himself knows you, even when no one knows: 'For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.'¹²

These things are said to the adversaries of the City of God, who belong to Babylon: who presume upon their own strength and glory in themselves and not in the Lord. Among these also are the Israelites according to the flesh, the earth-born citizens of the earthly Jerusalem. These, as the apostle says, are 'ignorant of God's righteousness' (that is, of that which God, Who alone is just and justifies us, gives to men); and they are 'going about to establish their own righteousness' (that is, as if it were something achieved by themselves instead of given by God); and so 'they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God'.¹³ In their pride, they believe that they can please God by their own strength, and that they do not need the help of that God Who is 'a God of knowledge', and Who is therefore also the judge of men's consciences. For in them He sees the thoughts of men, which are vain¹⁴ if they are only men's and do not come from Him.

God, says Hannah, 'prepares His own designs'. What designs does she mean, are we to suppose, except that the proud should fall and the humble rise? For surely she is expounding these designs for us when she says, 'The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength.' The bow has been broken: that is, the intention of those who seem to themselves mighty enough to fulfil the divine commands by human sufficiency alone, without the gift of God and without His aid. And men gird themselves with strength when their inner voice says, 'Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak.'¹⁵

'They that were full of bread', says Hannah, 'have been reduced to want, and the hungry have passed over the earth'. Who are to be understood by 'those who were full of bread', except those supposedly 'mighty men', that is, the Israelites, to whom the divine oracles were committed?¹⁶ Among that people the sons of the

¹² Gal. 6,3.

¹³ Rom. 10,3.

¹⁴ Cf. Psalm 94,11.

¹⁵ Psalm 6,2.

¹⁶ Cf. Rom. 3,2.

handmaid 'have been reduced' [*minorati sunt*] (this is not good Latin; but it expresses the meaning well enough, for they were reduced from major to minor importance). They have been reduced because, though they had bread – that is, the divine oracles, which, of all the nations at that time, only the Israelites received – they tasted only earthly things. By contrast, nations to whom the Law had not been given, after they had come to those oracles through the new covenant, passed over the earth in great hunger, because they tasted in those oracles the heavenly meaning, not the earthly. And Hannah seems to be seeking the reason why this happened when she says, 'The barren hath borne seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble.' The whole of the prophecy is here made clear for those who recognise the significance of the number seven, by which is signified the perfection of the whole Church. It is for this reason that the apostle John writes to seven Churches,¹⁷ in this way showing that he is writing to the one Church in all her fullness. Before this, Wisdom had also prefigured the Church in the Proverbs of Solomon, where it is said that she 'hath builded her an house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars'.¹⁸ For the City of God was barren in all the nations before the birth of the offspring we now behold. We also behold that the earthly Jerusalem, who hath many children, is waxed feeble; for her strength lay in whatever sons of the free woman were in that city. But now only the letter is there, and not the spirit;¹⁹ and so her strength has been taken away, and she is waxed feeble.

'The Lord killeth, and maketh alive': He killeth her who had many sons, and He maketh alive the barren woman who hath borne seven. This sentence might, however, be more appropriately taken to mean that He maketh alive the same persons whom He killeth; for it seems to be this meaning that Hannah reiterates when she adds, 'He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.' Also, the apostle says, 'If ye then be dead with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.'²⁰ It is certainly for the sake of their own salvation that those to whom he is speaking are dead with the Lord; and he then also says to them,

¹⁷ Cf. Rev. 1,4.

¹⁸ Prov. 9,1.

¹⁹ Cf. 2 Cor. 3,6ff.

²⁰ Cf. Coloss. 3,1ff; Rom. 6,8.

'Savour the things above, not the things of this earth'; so that these are they who have passed over the earth in hunger.

'Ye are dead', he says – behold: God killeth men for their salvation! He goes on, 'and your life is hid with Christ in God'²¹ – behold: God maketh those same persons alive! Has He, then, led the same persons down to the grave and brought them back again? There is no argument among the faithful that we see both these things fulfilled in Christ: in Him, that is, Who is our Head, and with Whom, as the apostle says, our life is hidden in God. For 'He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all',²² surely thereby delivered Him up to death; and, in raising Him from the dead, made Him alive once more. And since Christ's voice is acknowledged to be in the prophecy, 'For Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell',²³ it was this same Christ Whom God led down to the grave and brought back again. By His poverty we are made rich; for 'the Lord makes men poor and enriches them'. Now to understand the significance of this, we must give ear to the following: 'He humbles, and He exalts' – that is, He humbles the proud and exalts the humble. For in another place we read, 'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.'²⁴ And this is the whole meaning of what she says, whose name means 'God's Grace'.

Next, then, come the words, 'He raiseth up the poor out of the dust'; and I can give no better account of this statement than by applying it to Him Who for our sakes became poor so that, through His poverty, we might be enriched.²⁵ For God raised Him up from the dust so swiftly that His flesh did not see corruption. Nor shall I deem that the words which follow do not apply to Him; that God 'lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill'. 'The beggar' is certainly the same as 'the poor'; and we are here quite right to understand 'the dunghill' from which He is lifted up to mean the Jewish persecutors, among whose number the apostle included himself, as a persecutor of the Church, when he said, 'But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things as but dung, that I may win Christ.'²⁶ Thus, that poor

²¹ Coloss. 3,3.

²² Rom. 8,32.

²³ Psalm 16,10.

²⁴ James 4,6.

²⁵ Cf. 2 Cor. 8,9.

²⁶ Phil. 3,7f.

Man, Christ, was raised up from the dust above all the rich, and He was lifted up from the dunghill above all the wealthy, so that He might sit among the princes of the people, to whom He says, 'Ye shall sit upon twelve thrones.'²⁷ 'And to make them inherit the throne of glory': for those 'princes of the people' had said, 'Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee.'²⁸ This vow they had made with all their strength; but whence did this strength come, unless from Him of Whom Hannah's song now straightway goes on to say that 'He giveth strength to him that maketh a vow'? Otherwise, they would be like those mighty men whose bow He has broken. 'He giveth strength', she says, 'to him that maketh a vow': for no one who makes a righteous vow to the Lord can do so unless he receives from Him the power to make such a vow.

The next words, 'He hath blessed the years of the righteous', mean that the righteous will live without end with Him to Whom it was said, 'Thy years shall have no end.'²⁹ For there the years stand still, whereas here they pass away, and perish indeed. For before they come, they are not; and when they have come, they will be no more: for when they come they bear their own end with them.³⁰ Now of the two statements – that is, 'He giveth strength to him that maketh a vow' and 'He hath blessed the years of the righteous' – the former has reference to something that we do, and the latter to something that we receive. But the blessing is not received through the generosity of God, unless the vow has been performed with His aid; 'for by strength shall no man prevail'. 'The adversary of the Lord' – that is, one who envies and resists a man who has made a vow, in order that he may not be able to fulfil what he has vowed – 'shall be broken to pieces'. But the Greek is ambiguous, and the phrase may be understood as 'his own adversary'. For when God has begun to possess us, he who was our adversary at once becomes the adversary of God; and he will be vanquished by us, but not by our own strength, 'for by strength shall no man prevail'. Thus, 'The adversary of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; the Lord is holy'; so that the adversary is vanquished by the saints, who are sanctified by the holy Lord of the saints.

²⁷ Matt. 19,28.

²⁸ Matt. 19,27.

²⁹ Psalm 102,27.

³⁰ Cf. *Confess.*, 11,15,18ff.

And for this reason, 'Let the prudent man not glory in his prudence, nor the mighty man glory in his might, nor the rich man glory in his riches. He who glories, let him glory in this: to understand and know the Lord, and to do justice and righteousness in the midst of the earth.' If a man understands and knows that his very capacity to know and understand is given to him by God, then it is in no small degree that such a man understands and knows God Himself. 'What hast thou', says the apostle, 'that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?'³¹ That is, why do you glory as if anything of yours were due to you? Now the man who lives rightly does justice and righteousness; and he who lives rightly is he who obeys God's commandment. And 'the end of the commandment', that is, that towards which the commandment is directed, 'is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned'.³² Moreover, as the apostle John attests, 'love is of God'.³³ Thus, the capacity 'to do justice and righteousness' is of God.

But what does 'in the midst of the earth' mean? For it does not mean that those who dwell at the edges of the earth do not have to do justice and righteousness. Who would say such a thing? Why, therefore, are the words 'in the midst of the earth' added? If they were not added, and if the passage simply said 'to do justice and righteousness', it would then more obviously apply both to those who inhabit the midst of the earth, and those who dwell on the shores of the sea. But it seems to me that 'in the midst of the earth' means 'while each man lives in the body', and that this was added lest anyone should suppose that, after the end of the life lived in this body, there remains a period during which we can evade the divine judgment by doing the justice and righteousness which we did not do in the flesh. Indeed, each man carries his 'earth' around with him in this life, which the common earth receives when he dies, to restore it to him when he rises again. Hence, 'in the midst of the earth', that is, for as long as our soul is enclosed within this earthly body, we must 'do justice and righteousness'. This will be of help to us in time to come, when 'everyone will receive the things

³¹ 1 Cor. 4,7.

³² 1 Tim. 1,5.

³³ 1 John 4,7.

done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad'.³⁴ Here, when the apostle says 'in his body', he means, 'during the time when he lived in the body'. For, clearly, he does not mean that one who blasphemes is not guilty because no motion of his body is involved: because, while there is wickedness in his mind and impiety in his thoughts, no act of his bodily members takes place; for he acted thus during the time when he dwelt in the body. Also, we can understand what we read in the psalm in the same way: 'For God, our King before the ages, hath achieved salvation in the midst of the earth.'³⁵ 'God' here may be taken to mean the Lord Jesus, Who is before the ages because the ages were made by Him. For He 'achieved salvation in the midst of the earth' when the Word was made flesh and dwelt in an earthly body.³⁶

Having shown us, in these words, how one who glories ought to glory, not in himself, indeed, but in the Lord, the prophecy of Hannah speaks next of the retribution which is to come on the day of judgment: 'The Lord has gone up into the heavens and has thundered; He Himself shall judge the ends of the earth, because He is just.' Here, she adheres to the order of the confession of the faithful;³⁷ for the Lord Christ 'ascended into heaven, and thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead'.³⁸ For, as the apostle says, 'Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.'³⁹ Therefore, it was through His own clouds that He thundered, which He filled with the Holy Spirit when He ascended. And it is of these clouds that He speaks in the Book of Isaiah, to Jerusalem the handmaid, that is, to the ungrateful vineyard, threatening that the clouds would rain no rain upon it.⁴⁰ But when Hannah says, 'He Himself shall judge the ends of the earth' it is as if she said 'even the ends of the earth'. For she does not mean that He will not judge the other parts of the earth. Beyond doubt, He will judge all men. Or perhaps it is better to understand 'the ends

³⁴ 2 Cor. 5,10.

³⁵ Psalm 74,12.

³⁶ Cf. John 1,14.

³⁷ I.e., of the Apostles' Creed.

³⁸ Acts 10,42.

³⁹ Eph. 4,9f.

⁴⁰ Is. 5,6.

of the earth' to refer to the final condition of man. For God will not judge a man according to how he changes for better or worse in the midst of his life; rather, He will judge him according to how he is found at the end of it. That is why it is said that 'He that endureth to the end shall be saved.'⁴¹ Therefore, he who perseveres in doing justice and righteousness 'in the midst of the earth' will not be condemned when 'the ends of the earth' are judged.

Hannah then says, 'He Himself shall give strength unto our kings', so that they shall not be condemned in the judgment of God. That is: He shall give men strength to rule like kings over the flesh, and to vanquish the world by the power of Him Who shed His blood for them. 'And exalt the horn of his anointed.' In what way will Christ exalt the horn of His anointed? For it was said of Him above, 'The Lord has gone up into the heavens', and this was taken to refer to the Lord Christ. It is Christ Himself, as is said here, who will 'exalt the horn of His anointed'. Who, therefore, is Christ's anointed? Will He exalt the horn of everyone who believes in Him, just as Hannah herself says at the beginning of her hymn, 'Mine horn is exalted in the Lord'? Indeed, we can rightly say that all who have been anointed with the oil of Christ are His anointed; and yet it is the whole body, with its Head, which is the one Christ.

These things, then, were prophesied by Hannah, the mother of Samuel, a holy man of great renown. In him, indeed, was prefigured the transformation of the old priesthood which has now been fulfilled, when 'she that hath many children is waxed feeble', so that the barren woman who 'hath borne seven' has received a new priesthood in Christ.

5 Of the words spoken by the 'man of God' to Eli
through a prophetic spirit, signifying that the
priesthood which had been established according to
Aaron was to be abolished

But this transformation of the priesthood was announced more plainly by the 'man of God' who was sent to Eli the priest himself. Scripture is indeed silent as to his name; but, having regard to his

⁴¹ Matt. 10,22.

office and ministry, there is no doubt that we are to understand that he was a prophet. For it is written thus:

And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? And did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel? Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people? Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever; but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house. And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever. And the man of thine whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age. And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phineas; in one day they shall die both of them. And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my soul: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed all his days. And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into some part of thy priesthood, that I may eat a piece of bread.⁴²

But the transformation of the old priesthood, foretold so clearly in this prophecy, was not brought literally to its completion in Samuel. He was not, indeed, among the sons of Aaron, to whose offspring had been assigned the task of being priests; but he was still not of a different tribe from that which had been appointed by

⁴² 1 Sam. 2,27ff.

the Lord to serve the altar.⁴³ In him, however, was foreshadowed the transformation which was to come about through Jesus Christ; for whereas the actual fact of Samuel's succession pertained literally to the old covenant, it pointed figuratively to the new. The same is true of the words spoken by the prophet to Eli the priest; for there were priests of the tribe of Aaron in later times: Zadok, for example, and Abiathar in the reign of David,⁴⁴ and others subsequently, until the time came when the transformation of the priesthood, foretold so long before, was duly accomplished in Christ. But who, looking at the matter with the eye of faith, will not see that the transformation has been completed now? For, though they were once commanded by God's law to appoint a priesthood of the seed of Aaron, now, indeed, there is left to the Jews no tabernacle, no temple, no altar, no sacrifice, and therefore no priesthood.

This transformation is indeed commemorated by the prophet when he says: 'The Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: But now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.' When he speaks of 'the house of thy father', he is referring not to Eli's immediate father, but to that Aaron who was instituted as the first priest, from whose offspring all subsequent priests were to come; and so much is clear from the prophet's earlier words: 'Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest?' Which of Eli's fathers was in that servitude in Egypt, and was chosen for the priesthood after they were set free? Only Aaron. It was of Aaron's stock, therefore, that the prophet spoke in this passage, when he said that the time would come when they would no longer be priests; and now we see this fulfilled. Let faith be vigilant, and it will discern and cleave to the things which are clearly presented to it: things which are heaped up before the eyes even of those who have no wish to see them. He says, 'Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in

⁴³ Augustine clarifies this passage at *Retract.*, 11,69. In Eli's day it was customary for priests to be succeeded by their sons; but Samuel, though not a priest's son, was nonetheless of the priestly tribe.

⁴⁴ Cf. 2 Sam. 15,24.

thine house. And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart.' Behold: the days which were foretold have now come. There is now no priest according to the order of Aaron; and whenever a man of his tribe sees the sacrifice of the Christians flourishing throughout all the world, whereas that great honour has been taken away from him, his eyes are consumed with lamentation and his heart grieves.

Now the next words pertain specifically to the house of Eli, to whom they were spoken: 'All the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age. And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phineas; in one day they shall die both of them.' This, therefore, was done as a sign of the transference of the priesthood from the house of Eli. But by this sign it was also indicated that the priesthood of the house of Aaron was to be transformed. For the death of Eli's sons did not signify merely the death of men, but that of the priesthood of the sons of Aaron itself. Moreover, the next words refer to that Priest who was prefigured by Samuel when the latter took Eli's place. Hence, these words were spoken of Christ Jesus, the True Priest of the new covenant: 'And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my soul; and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed all his days.' This house is the eternal and heavenly Jerusalem. By 'he shall walk before [*transibit*]' is meant 'he shall dwell with', as when God had previously said, of the house of Aaron, 'Thy house, and the house of thy father, shall walk before me for ever.' Moreover, the statement, 'he shall walk before mine anointed', must surely be read as 'it shall walk before mine anointed': that is, must be taken as referring to the house itself, not to that Priest who is Himself the Christ, the Mediator and Saviour. His house, then, shall dwell in the presence of Christ. But *transibit* can also be taken to mean 'he shall pass' from death to life during 'all his days' spent in this mortal condition, down to the end of the world. Again, when God says that the faithful priest 'shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my soul', we should not infer from this that God has a soul; for He is the Creator of the soul. Rather, this is said of God metaphorically, not literally, just as we speak of His hands, or His feet, or other parts of His body.

And so that we shall not believe, because of metaphors of this kind, that it is with respect to his appearance that man is made in the image of God, Scripture refers in addition to the wings of God, which a man certainly does not have: 'Hide me under the shadow of Thy wings.'⁴⁵ Here, men are to understand that such descriptions of God's ineffable nature are using words not in a literal, but in a transferred sense.

The words which come next in the prophecy are: 'And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him.' This, however, is said not of the house of Eli as such, but of that of Aaron, of which some men remained down to the time of the coming of Jesus Christ, and of whom, indeed, there is even now no lack. For it had been said already to the house of Eli that 'All the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age.' How, then, could it be truly said here, 'And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him', if it was also true that all were to die in the flower of their age? The second statement, then, must apply not to the house of Eli, but to those who belong to the stock of Aaron: that is, to the whole priesthood according to the order of Aaron. In this case, the second statement refers to the predestined remnant, of whom another prophet says, 'a remnant of them shall return',⁴⁶ and the apostle says, 'Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.'⁴⁷ Therefore, since it is well understood that 'every one that is left in thine house' belongs to this remnant, there is no doubt that every such one will come to believe in Christ, just as there is no doubt that very many of the race of Aaron came to believe in Him in the time of the apostles. Even now, indeed, such believers are not wholly lacking, though they are very rare. In this, then, are fulfilled the next words of the prophecy of the man of God: 'and crouch to him for a piece of silver'. Crouch to whom, if not to that High Priest Who is God indeed? For not even in that priesthood according to the order of Aaron did men come to the temple or altar of God to crouch to the priest. Again, to what does the phrase 'a piece of silver' refer, if not to the brevity of that statement of faith to which the apostle alludes,

⁴⁵ Psalm 17,8.

⁴⁶ Is. 10,22.

⁴⁷ Rom. 11,5.

when he recalls the words, 'The Lord will complete His word and cut it short upon the earth'⁴⁸ Indeed, the psalm bears witness to this interpretation when it uses the word 'silver' to stand for the divine eloquence: 'The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.'⁴⁹

What, therefore, does he say, who comes to crouch to the priest of God, and the Priest Who is God? 'Put me, I pray thee, into some part of thy priesthood, that I may eat a piece of bread': that is, I do not ask to be put in the honoured place of my fathers, for that is no more. Put me instead into some part of Thy priesthood. For 'I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God':⁵⁰ I desire to be a member, however humble and however lowly, of Thy priesthood. And what is meant by 'priesthood' here, no doubt, is the Christian people itself: that people whose Priest is the 'one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus'.⁵¹ This is the people whom the apostle Peter calls 'a holy people, a royal priesthood'.⁵² Some translators, indeed, give the rendering, 'thy sacrifice', rather than 'thy priesthood'; but, nonetheless, this still signifies the same Christian people. Hence, the apostle Paul says, 'For we being many are one bread, and one body.'⁵³ Therefore, the addition of the words 'that I may eat a piece of bread' aptly expresses the kind of sacrifice here referred to, of which the Priest Himself says: 'The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.'⁵⁴ This is the sacrifice not according to the order of Aaron, but according to the order of Melchizedek. 'Whoso readeth, let him understand.'⁵⁵ Thus, when it is said, 'Put me, I pray thee, into some part of thy priesthood, that I may eat a piece of bread', this is a brief confession of faith: a confession of wholesome humility. This confession is itself the 'piece of silver'; for it is short, and it is the eloquence of the Lord, Whose habitation is in the heart of the faithful. For God had said already that He had given food to the house of Aaron, from the sacrifices of the old covenant; for He said: 'Did

⁴⁸ Cf. Rom. 9,28; Is. 10,23.

⁴⁹ Psalm 12,6.

⁵⁰ Psalm 84,10.

⁵¹ 1 Tim. 2,5.

⁵² 1 Pet. 2,9.

⁵³ 1 Cor. 10,17.

⁵⁴ John 6,51.

⁵⁵ Matt. 24,15.

I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel?' (and those were, of course, the sacrifices of the Jews). Therefore, the man of God now said, 'that I may eat a piece of bread'; for that is the sacrifice of the Christians in the new covenant.

6 Of the Jewish priesthood and kingdom, which, though said to have been established for ever, did not endure; so that the promise of eternity must be understood to apply to other things

These things, therefore, are now revealed with a clarity as great as the loftiness with which they were foretold. Nonetheless, someone may still be moved to ask, How are we to be sure that all the things whose coming is foretold in these books will indeed come to pass? And it is not without reason that this is asked; for one of the things divinely spoken of in the passage which we have just considered obviously could not come to pass: 'Thy house, and the house of thy father, shall walk before me for ever.' For we see that the priesthood has been transformed; and there can be no hope that what was once promised to the house of Aaron may at some time be fulfilled, for that which took its place when it was rejected and changed is itself proclaimed as eternal. He who says this, however, does not yet understand, or does not recollect, that this very priesthood according to the order of Aaron was appointed as the shadow of a future eternal priesthood. For this reason, then, when eternity is promised, it is not promised to the mere shadow and figure, but to that which is foreshadowed and prefigured by it. But lest it should be supposed that the shadow itself was to endure, it was fitting that its transformation should also be foretold.

By the same token, the kingdom of Saul, who was himself certainly rejected and cast aside, was the shadow of a future kingdom which should endure for all eternity. For the oil with which he was anointed, and by virtue of which *chrism* he was called the anointed one [*christus*], is certainly to be taken in a mystical sense, and to be understood as a great mystery. David himself venerated this mystery in him so greatly that he trembled, his heart smitten, when, hiding in a dark cave which Saul also entered when pressed by the necessity of nature, he came secretly behind him and cut off a small

piece of his robe. He did this so that he might be able to show Saul how he had spared him when he could have killed him, thereby removing from his mind the suspicion by reason of which he had violently persecuted the holy David, thinking him his enemy. But David feared greatly lest he should be thought guilty of violating so great a mystery in Saul merely by laying hold of his clothes. For thus it is written: 'And David's heart smote him because he had taken away the skirt of his cloak.' And to the men who were with him, who urged him to slay Saul now that he had been delivered into his hands, he said, 'The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord.'⁵⁶ He displayed such veneration to this shadow of what was to come, therefore, not for its own sake, but for the sake of what it prefigured. So too with what Samuel said to Saul:

Since thou hast not kept my commandment which the Lord commanded thee, whereas once the Lord prepared thy kingdom over Israel for ever, yet now thy kingdom shall not continue for thee; and the Lord will seek Him a man after His own heart, and the Lord will command him to be a prince over His people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee.⁵⁷

This not to be taken as meaning that God had at first prepared Saul's kingdom for ever, but afterwards, when he sinned, refused to keep His promise; for God was not ignorant that Saul would sin. But He had prepared his kingdom so that it might prefigure the eternal kingdom. And so He added, 'Yet now thy kingdom shall not continue for thee.' What that kingdom signified, therefore, has stood and shall stand; but it was not to stand for Saul, because he himself was not to reign for ever. Nor were his offspring, lest the promised 'for ever' should seem to be fulfilled as his progeny succeeded one another. 'And the Lord', Samuel says, 'will seek Him a man', meaning either David or the Mediator of the new covenant, Who was indeed prefigured in the chrism with which David himself and his offspring were anointed. But, again, it is not as if God did not know where to find a man. Rather, in speaking through a man,

⁵⁶ 1 Sam. 24, 1 ff.

⁵⁷ 1 Sam. 13, 13 f.

He speaks after the fashion of men, and it is by speaking thus that He seeks us. For not only to God the Father, but also to His only-begotten son, Who came to seek that which was lost,⁵⁸ we were known already, and chosen in Him even before the foundation of the world.⁵⁹ 'He will seek him a man' therefore means 'He will have His own'. Hence in Latin the 'He will seek' [*quaerit*] receives a prefix and becomes 'He will gain' [*adquirat*], the meaning of which is plain enough; although, even without the addition of the prefix, *quaerere* is understood to mean the same as *adquirere*, which is why gains are called *quaestus*.

7 Of the disruption of the Israelite kingdom, in which was prefigured the perpetual division of spiritual from carnal Israel

Saul sinned again through disobedience, and again Samuel said to him, in the word of the Lord, 'Because thou has despised the word of the Lord, the Lord hath despised thee, that thou mayest not be king over Israel.' And again for the same sin, when Saul confessed it, and prayed for pardon, and asked Samuel to turn again with him to worship the Lord, Samuel replied,

I will not return with thee: for thou hast despised the word of the Lord, and the Lord will despise thee that thou mayest not be king over Israel. And as Samuel turned about to go away, Saul laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and rent it. And Samuel said unto him, The Lord hath rent the kingdom from Israel out of thine hand this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is good above thee, and will divide Israel in twain. And He will not be changed, neither will He repent: for he is not as a man, that He should repent; who threatens and does not persist.⁶⁰

He to whom it is said, 'The Lord will despise thee that thou mayest not be king over Israel', and 'The Lord hath rent the kingdom from Israel out of thine hand this day', reigned over Israel

⁵⁸ Cf. Luke 19, 10.

⁵⁹ Cf. Eph. 1, 4.

⁶⁰ 1 Sam. 15, 23ff.

forty years:⁶¹ for as long a time, that is, as David himself did; but he heard this in the early part of his reign. This was done so that we might understand that none of his stock was to reign, and that we should look to the stock of David, from which also is sprung, according to the flesh, the 'Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus'.⁶²

But the Scripture here quoted does not have what is read in most of the Latin texts: 'The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from out of thine hand this day.' Rather, what is found in the Greek versions is as we have set it down: 'The Lord hath rent the kingdom from Israel out of thine hand'; and this is so that the words 'out of thine hand' may be understood to mean 'from Israel'. This man Saul, therefore, prefigured in his own person the people of Israel: the people from whom the kingdom would be taken away when Christ Jesus our Lord should come to reign not carnally, but spiritually, through the new covenant. And when it is said to Saul, 'And will give it to thy neighbour', this is to be understood in terms of carnal kinship; for Christ, according to the flesh, was of Israel, and Saul was also. Now what is added, 'good above thee', can indeed be understood to mean, 'Better than thee', and certain persons have interpreted it in this way; but it is better to take 'good above thee' as meaning that, because He is good, he is therefore 'above thee', according to that other prophetic utterance, 'Till I put all Thine enemies beneath Thy feet.'⁶³ And among those enemies is Israel, from whom, as His persecutor, Christ took away the kingdom; although the Israel in whom there was no guile was there too,⁶⁴ like grain, as it were, in the midst of the chaff. For certainly the apostles came out of Israel, and many martyrs, of whom Stephen was the first, and many churches, which the apostle Paul commemorates, praising God for their conversion.⁶⁵

There is no doubt that the next words are to be understood as a reference to this distinction, 'And will divide Israel in twain': that is, into the Israel which is the enemy of Christ and the Israel which cleaves to Christ; the Israel belonging to the handmaid and the

⁶¹ Cf. Acts 13,21.

⁶² 1 Tim. 2,5.

⁶³ Psalm 110,1.

⁶⁴ Cf. John 1,47.

⁶⁵ Cf. Gal. 1,24.

Israel belonging to the free woman. For these two nations were at first together, just as Abraham still clave to the handmaid until the barren woman, made fruitful by the grace of God, cried, 'Cast out the bondwoman and her son.'⁶⁶ We know, indeed, that, because of the sin of Solomon, Israel was divided into two in the reign of his son Rehoboam, and that this division endured, with each part having its own kings, until, with immense devastation, the whole nation was overthrown and borne away by the Chaldeans. But what had this to do with Saul, when, if any such thing were threatened, it would be threatened against David himself, whose son Solomon was? Finally, the Hebrew nation is not now merely divided within itself, but scattered abroad throughout the earth, in the fellowship of the same error. But that division with which God threatened the kingdom and people of Israel as embodied in the person of Saul, who represented them, is shown to be eternal and immutable by what is added, 'And He will not be changed, neither will He repent; for He is not as a man, that He should repent; who threatens and does not persist': that is, a man threatens and does not persist, but God, Who does not repent like a man, does not. For when we read that God repents, this signifies merely a change in things, whereas the divine foreknowledge remains immutable. Therefore, when it is said that God does not repent, this is to be understood as meaning that He does not change.

We see that the divine sentence revealed in these words concerning the division of the people of Israel was altogether indissoluble and entirely perpetual. Those who have passed over thence to Christ, or who are now passing over, or who will pass over: none of these were truly of that people, either according to God's foreknowledge or according to the single common nature of the human race. By the same token, of those Israelites who, cleaving to Christ, have persevered in Him, none shall ever be among those Israelites who persist in being His enemies even down to the end of this life; rather, they will remain forever in the separation which is here foretold. For the old covenant 'from the Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage',⁶⁷ is of no profit, except insofar as it bears witness to the new covenant. Otherwise, no matter how much time

⁶⁶ Gen. 21,10.

⁶⁷ Gal. 4,24.

men spend in reading Moses, a veil is put over their hearts; but when anyone shall turn thence to Christ, the veil shall be taken away.⁶⁸ For the very purpose of those who turn is changed from the old to the new, so that each no longer has as his purpose the obtaining of carnal felicity, but of spiritual. Hence what the great prophet Samuel himself did, before he had anointed Saul. For he 'cried unto the Lord for Israel, and the Lord heard him'; and Samuel offered a whole burnt-offering, as the foreigners were coming to battle against the people of God; and the Lord thundered over them, and they were confounded, and fell in the presence of Israel, and were vanquished. And Samuel then took a stone and set it up between the old and new Mizpeh, and called the name of it Ebenezer, which in Latin is 'the stone of the Helper'; and he said, 'Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.'⁶⁹ Mizpeh is interpreted 'purpose'. That 'stone of the Helper' is the mediation of the Saviour, by which we pass over from the old Mizpeh to the new – that is, from the desire with which men look forward to a false and carnal blessedness in the carnal kingdom, to the desire with which they look forward to the truest spiritual blessedness in the kingdom of heaven. And since nothing is better than the latter blessedness, the Lord helps us to attain it.

8 Of the promises to David in his son, which are not at all fulfilled in Solomon, but which are found to be most fully so in Christ

I see, then, that, to the extent that it pertains to the matter with which we are here dealing, I must now show what God promised to David himself, who succeeded Saul in the kingdom: a change which prefigured that final change for the sake of which all things were divinely spoken, and all things written.

When many things had gone prosperously with King David, he thought to make a house for God: namely, that temple of most excellent fame which was afterwards built by his son King Solomon. While he was considering this, the word of the Lord came to

⁶⁸ Cf. 2 Cor. 3,15f.

⁶⁹ 1 Sam. 7,12.

Nathan the prophet, which he brought to the king.⁷⁰ In Nathan's prophecy, after God had said that a house should not be built for him by David himself, and that never at any time had He commanded any of His people to build him a house of cedar, He then said:

And now thus shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith Almighty God, I took thee from the sheep-cote that thou mightest be for a ruler over my people in Israel: and I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies from before thy face, and have made thee a name, according to the name of the great ones who are over the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and I will plant him, and he shall dwell apart, and shall be troubled no more; and the son of wickedness shall not humble him any more, as from the beginning, from the days when I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give thee rest from all thine enemies, and the Lord will tell thee, because thou shalt build an house for him. And it shall come to pass when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will prepare his kingdom. He shall build me an house for my name; and I will order his throne even to eternity. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. And if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the sons of men: but my mercy I will not take away from him, as I took it away from those whom I put away from before my face. And his house shall be faithful, and his kingdom even for evermore before men, and his throne shall be set up even for evermore.⁷¹

He who supposes that this grand promise was fulfilled in Solomon greatly errs. For he notices the saying, 'He shall build me an house', inasmuch as Solomon built that most noble temple; but he does not notice the words, 'His house shall be faithful, and his kingdom for evermore before me.' Let him give heed, therefore, and behold the house of Solomon full of foreign women worshipping false gods, and the king himself, once wise, now seduced into the same idolatry by them, and cast down. And let him not venture

⁷⁰ 2 Sam. 7.4.

⁷¹ 2 Sam. 7.8ff.

to believe that God either promised falsely, or was unable to fore-know that Solomon and his house would become what they did. We must not doubt here, or see the fulfilment of these things other than in Christ our Lord, Who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, lest, like the carnal Jews, we should vainly and idly seek some other. For even they understand that the son of whom they read in that place as promised to David was not Solomon; so that, with amazing blindness to Him Who was promised and is now so manifestly declared, they say that they hope for another.

Indeed, even in Solomon there was wrought no small image of things to come, in that he built the temple, and had peace according to his name (for Solomon is 'Peacemaker' in Latin); and, at the beginning of his reign, he was wondrously deserving of praise. But although, in his own person, he was a forerunner and a shadow of what was to come, he did not show men Christ the Lord Himself. Hence, some things are written of Christ as if they were prophesied of Solomon, whereas Holy Scripture, which prophesies by events also, delineates in Solomon, in a certain sense, the figure of things to come. For, besides the books of divine history in which his reign is chronicled, the name of Solomon is also written into the title of Psalm 72, in which a great many things are said which cannot all apply to him. Rather, they apply to the Lord Christ; and so clearly do they do so that it is quite apparent that, in Solomon, the figure is contained after the fashion of a shadow, whereas, in Christ, the truth itself is presented to us. For the boundaries within which Solomon's kingdom was enclosed are well known; yet in the same psalm, to say nothing of other things, we read, 'He shall have dominion from sea even to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.'⁷² And it is in Christ that we see this fulfilled; for His dominion has indeed taken its beginning from the river where John baptised. For, when pointed out by John, Christ began to be acknowledged by the disciples, who called Him not only Master, but also Lord.

Again, Solomon began to reign while his father David was still alive: a thing which none of their other kings did. And this was done for no other reason than to show with sufficient clarity that

⁷² Psalm 72,8.

the prophecy earlier spoken to his father did not refer to Solomon himself: 'And it shall come to pass when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will prepare his kingdom.' For how will it be possible to suppose, on the strength of the next words, 'He shall build me an house', that this prophecy refers to Solomon, when the preceding words are, 'When thy days are fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will raise up seed after thee'? Is it not clear from this that another 'Peacemaker' is here promised: one of Whom it is foretold that He will be raised up, not before David's death, as Solomon was, but after it? For no matter how long the intervening time was to be before Jesus Christ came, it is beyond doubt that He came long after the death of King David, to whom it was thus promised that Christ would come and build a house of God not of wood and stone, but of men: a house that He builds to our joy. For to this house, that is, to all Christ's faithful, the apostle says, 'The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.'⁷³

9 How similar the prophecy of Christ in Psalm 89 is to those things promised in the prophecy of Nathan in the Book of Samuel

So too in Psalm 89, the title of which is 'An instruction for himself by Ethan the Israelite', mention is made of God's promises to King David, and certain things are said there which resemble those found in the Book of Samuel; for example: 'I have sworn to David my servant that I will prepare his seed for ever.'⁷⁴ And again,

Then thou spakest in vision to thy sons, and saidst, I have laid help upon the mighty one, and have exalted the chosen one out of my people. I have found David my servant, and with my holy oil I have anointed him. For mine hand shall help him, and mine arm shall strengthen him. The enemy shall not prevail against him, and the son of iniquity shall harm him no more. And I will beat down his foes from before his face, and those that hate him will I put to flight. And my truth and my mercy shall be with him, and in my name shall his horn be

⁷³ 1 Cor 3,17.

⁷⁴ Psalm 89,3f.

exalted. I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers. He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the undertaker of my salvation. Also I will make him my first-born, high among the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for ever more, and my covenant shall be faithful with him. His seed also will I set for ever and ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.⁷⁵

When these words are rightly understood, they are all seen to refer to the Lord Jesus Christ, but under the name of David, because of the form of a servant which the same Mediator took upon Himself from the Virgin of the seed of David.

Immediately afterwards comes an account of the sins of David's sons, similar to the account set forth in the Book of Samuel; and it is all too easy to understand this as if it applied to Solomon. For there – that is, in the Book of Samuel – God says, 'And if he commit iniquity, I will chastise his iniquity with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the sons of men; but my mercy will I not take away from him',⁷⁶ meaning by stripes the strokes of correction. Hence that saying, 'Touch not mine anointed';⁷⁷ for what else does this mean but, Do not injure them? And, in the psalm, when speaking as if of David, He says something of the same kind there also. 'If his sons', He says, 'forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they profane my righteousnesses, and keep not my commandments; I will visit their iniquities with the rod, and their faults with stripes: but my mercy I will not make void from him.'⁷⁸ He did not say 'from them', although He spoke of David's sons, not of David himself; but He said 'from him', which, properly understood, means the same thing. For in Christ Himself, Who is the Head of the Church, there can be found no sins which might require to be divinely restrained by human correction, mercy being still preserved. Sins are, however, to be found in His body and members, which are His people. And so the Book of Samuel speaks of 'his iniquity', whereas the psalm speaks of the iniquities of 'his sons', so that we may understand that what is said of His body is in a manner of speaking said of Himself. So too, when Saul persecuted

⁷⁵ Psalm 89,19ff.

⁷⁶ 2 Sam. 7,14f.

⁷⁷ Psalm 105,15.

⁷⁸ Psalm 89,30ff.

His body, which is His faithful people, He Himself said from Heaven, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?'⁷⁹ Then, in the following words of the psalm, He says, 'My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. I have sworn once by my holiness, if I should lie unto David'⁸⁰ – that is, I will by no means lie unto David; for this manner of speaking is common in Scripture. And He then tells us what it is in respect of which He will not lie, when He adds: 'His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven.'⁸¹

10 How different were events in the kingdom of the earthly Jerusalem from those which God had promised, so that the truth of that promise might be understood to pertain to the glory of the other King and Kingdom

After such weighty confirmations of so great a promise, that it might not be supposed that this promise was fulfilled in Solomon, the psalm says, as if such a fulfilment had been hoped for, but found not to be true: 'But Thou hast cast him off, and hast brought him to nothing, O Lord.' And this indeed came to pass in the kingdom of Solomon, in his posterity. For even the earthly Jerusalem itself, the seat of the kingdom, was then overthrown, and, above all, the very temple which had been built by Solomon was destroyed. But lest God should for this reason be thought to have acted contrary to His own promise, the psalm straightway adds, 'Thou hast delayed thine anointed.'⁸² If the Lord's anointed is delayed, therefore, he is not Solomon, and neither is he David himself. For, on the one hand, all the kings were called His anointed [*christus*]; for all of them – not only from King David onwards, but even from Saul, who was the first to be anointed king of that same people, and whom David himself called 'the Lord's anointed' – were consecrated with that mystical anointing. Yet, on the other hand, there

⁷⁹ Acts 9,4

⁸⁰ Psalm 89,33ff.

⁸¹ Psalm 89,36f.

⁸² Psalm 89,38.

is only one true Christ, Whose image they bore by virtue of the prophetic unction. According to the opinion of men, who supposed that the anointed should be understood as David or Solomon, His coming was long delayed; but, according to the disposition of God, He was to come in His own time.

The next part of this psalm goes on to say what, in the meantime, while He was delayed, became of the kingdom of the earthly Jerusalem, where it was hoped that He would reign indeed:

Thou hast made void the covenant of Thy servant; Thou has profaned in the earth his sanctuary. Thou hast broken down all his hedges; Thou hast put his strongholds in fear. All that pass by the way spoil him; he is made a reproach to his neighbours. Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries; Thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice. Thou hast turned aside the edge of his sword, and hast not made him to stand in the battle. Thou hast made his glory to cease; Thou hast dashed down his throne to the ground. Thou hast shortened the days of his youth; Thou hast poured confusion over him.⁸³

All these things came upon Jerusalem the handmaid, in which some also reigned who were children of the free woman, holding sway over that kingdom for the time being, but holding the kingdom of the heavenly Jerusalem, whose sons they were, in true faith, and hoping in the true Christ. But if the history of the affairs of this kingdom is read, it will show how these things came upon it.

II Of the substance of the people of God, which, by His assumption of flesh, is in Christ, Who alone had power to deliver His own soul from hell

After he has prophesied these things, the prophet turns to praying to God; but his prayer is itself also a prophecy: 'How long, O Lord? Dost thou turn away for ever?'⁸⁴ Here, 'Thy face' is to be supplied, for it is said elsewhere, 'How long dost Thou turn away Thy face from me?'⁸⁵ Some texts have here not 'dost thou turn away' but

⁸³ Psalm 89,39ff.

⁸⁴ Psalm 89,46.

⁸⁵ Psalm 13,1.

'wilt thou turn away'. However, the verse could be understood to mean, 'Thou turnest away Thy mercy, which Thou didst promise to David.' But when the psalmist says, 'for ever', what does this mean, if not 'to the end'? And by 'the end' is to be understood the end of time, when even the Jewish nation is to believe in Christ.⁸⁶ Before that end, however, those things which the psalmist has just lamented in sorrow must come to pass. And it is also for this reason that the words which follow are: 'Thy wrath shall burn like fire. Remember what is my substance.'⁸⁷ For this cannot be better understood than of Jesus Himself, the substance of His people, from whose nature His flesh came. 'For not in vain', says the psalm, 'hast Thou made all the sons of men.'⁸⁸ For had the one Son of Man not been the substance of Israel, through which Son of Man many sons of men should be redeemed, then all the sons of men would have been made entirely in vain. Now, indeed, the whole of human nature has fallen from truth into vanity through the sin of the first man; and it is for this reason that another psalm says, 'Man is like to vanity; his days are as a shadow that passeth away.'⁸⁹ Yet God has not made all the sons of men in vain, for He redeems many from vanity through the Mediator, Jesus. It was not wholly in vain, indeed, that He made even those whom He did not foreknow unto redemption; for, in the fairest and most righteous order of the whole rational creation, He made them for the benefit of those who were to be redeemed, and for the comparison of the two cities one with the other. Next come the words: 'What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?'⁹⁰ Who is this but that substance of Israel out of the seed of David, Christ Jesus, of Whom the apostle says that 'rising from the dead He now dieth not, and death shall no more have dominion over Him'?⁹¹ For though He was dead, He shall live and not see death, for He has delivered His soul from the hand of hell, into which He had descended to release some from the chains of hell;

⁸⁶ Cf. Bk xx, 29.

⁸⁷ Psalm 89, 46f.

⁸⁸ Psalm 89, 47.

⁸⁹ Psalm 144, 4.

⁹⁰ Psalm 89, 48.

⁹¹ Rom 6, 9.

and He has delivered it by that power of which He speaks in the Gospel: 'I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again.'⁹²

12 When the psalm says, 'Lord, where are Thine ancient lovingkindnesses', and so on, to whose person are we to understand the entreaty for the promises to belong?

But the remainder of this psalm runs as follows: 'Lord, where are Thine ancient lovingkindnesses, which thou swarest unto David in Thy truth? Remember, Lord, the reproach of Thy servants, which I have borne in my bosom of many nations; wherewith Thine enemies have reproached, O Lord, wherewith they have reproached the change of Thine anointed.'⁹³ Now it can rightly be asked, Is this spoken in the person of those Israelites who desired that the promise made to David might be fulfilled for them? Or rather in that of the Christians, who are Israelites not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit? It was, indeed, spoken or written in the time of Ethan, from whose name this psalm receives its title, and this was also the time when David was king. Thus, it would not have been said in the psalm, 'Lord, where are Thine ancient lovingkindnesses, which thou swarest unto David in Thy truth?', unless the prophet had taken upon himself the person of those who were to come in the far future, to whom the time when these things were promised to King David was 'ancient'. On the other hand, it may be understood to mean that many nations, when they persecuted the Christians, reproached them with the passion of Christ, which Scripture calls His 'change', because by dying He is made immortal. Again, according to this line of interpretation, the 'change' of Christ may be understood as a reproach to the Israelites, because, though they hoped that He would be theirs, He was made the Saviour of the Gentiles. For many nations who have believed in Him by the new covenant now reproach those who remain in the old; and so it is for this reason that it is said, 'Remember, Lord, the reproach of Thy servants.' For, if the Lord does not forget, but rather has mercy on

⁹² John 10, 18.

⁹³ Psalm 89, 49ff.

them, they themselves will also come to believe after this reproach.

But the interpretation that I proposed first seems to me the most appropriate one. For the words 'Remember, Lord, the reproach of Thy servants' cannot properly be put into the mouths of those who are reproached because Christ has left them and turned to the Gentiles; for such Jews are not to be called the servants of God. These words do, however, fit those who, when they suffered great humiliations through persecution for Christ's name, could remember that an exalted kingdom had been promised to the seed of David: to those who, desiring such a kingdom, could say – not in despair, but as seeking, knocking – 'Lord, where are Thine ancient lovingkindnesses, which Thou swarest unto David in thy truth? Remember, Lord, the reproach of Thy servants, that I have borne in my bosom of many nations' (that is, have patiently endured within me) 'wherewith Thine enemies have reproached, O Lord, wherewith they have reproached the change of Thine anointed' (for they have supposed it to be not a change, but a destruction). Again, what does 'Remember, Lord' mean, if not, 'Remember to have mercy, and, in recompense for humiliation patiently endured, repay me with the exaltation which Thou swarest unto David in Thy truth'?

On the other hand, we may after all assign these words to the Jews. For such words could have been spoken by those servants of God who, after the sack of the earthly Jerusalem, before Jesus Christ was born in human form, were led away captive. If so, we should understand 'the change of Thine anointed' to mean that it is not an earthly and carnal felicity, such as was seen during the few years of Solomon's reign, which is to be awaited with faith, but a heavenly, spiritual felicity. The unbelieving nations knew nothing of such felicity at that time, when they were exulting over God's people and insulting them in their captivity. But what else were they insulting but 'the change of Thine anointed', reproaching, in their ignorance, those who knew the truth? That is the reason for the words which come after this verse, and with which the psalm ends: 'Let the blessing of the Lord be for evermore. Amen, and Amen.'⁹⁴ These words apply appropriately to the whole people of God who belong to the Heavenly Jerusalem: both to those who were concealed during the time of the old covenant, before the revelation

⁹⁴ Psalm 89,52.

of the new, and to those who, after the revelation of the new covenant, are clearly revealed as belonging to Christ. For 'the blessing of the Lord' on David's seed for which we are to hope is not something that will endure for a short time only, like that blessing which appeared in the days of Solomon, but for all eternity; and in the entire certainty of that hope it is said, 'Amen, and Amen'. The repetition of the word is a confirmation of that hope. David, therefore, understood this, when he said, in the Second Book of Samuel, from which we have digressed to expound this psalm, 'Thou hast spoken also for Thy servant's house for a great while to come.'⁹⁵ And so also a little later he says, 'Now begin, and bless the house of Thy servant for evermore',⁹⁶ and so on, for the son was then about to be born from whom his posterity was to be carried down to Christ: through whom his house was to be eternal, and was to be made the house of God. For it is called the house of David because of David's race; but the same house is called the house of God because of the temple of God, made of men, not of stones. In that temple the people shall dwell eternally with their God and in their God, and God shall dwell with His people and in His people, so that God may fill His people, and the people be filled with their God, while God shall be all in all.⁹⁷ He Himself, Who is their strength in war, shall also be their reward in peace. Thus, when it is said in the words of Nathan, 'And the Lord will tell thee what an house thou shalt build for Him',⁹⁸ it is then said in David's own words, 'For Thou, Lord Almighty, God of Israel, hast opened the ear of Thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house.'⁹⁹ For this house is built both by us, by living well, and by God, by helping us to live well; for 'except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it'.¹⁰⁰ And when the final dedication of this house shall come to pass, then shall be fulfilled what God here speaks through Nathan, saying, 'And I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant him, and he shall dwell apart, and shall be troubled no more; and the son of iniquity shall not humble him any

⁹⁵ 2 Sam. 7,19.

⁹⁶ 2 Sam. 7,29.

⁹⁷ Cf. 1 Cor. 15,28.

⁹⁸ 2 Sam. 7,11.

⁹⁹ 2 Sam. 7,27.

¹⁰⁰ Psalm 127,1.

more, as from the beginning, from the days when I appointed judges over my people Israel.¹⁰¹

13 Whether the true meaning of this promised peace can be ascribed to those times which ran their course under Solomon

But if anyone hopes for so great a good as this in this world, and on this earth, his wisdom is but folly. Can anyone suppose that it was fulfilled in the peace of Solomon's reign? Scripture certainly commends that peace with great praise, as foreshadowing that which is to come. But the belief that God's promised peace was fulfilled in Solomon's reign is to be vigilantly resisted. For when it is said, 'And the son of iniquity shall not humble him any more', it is at once added, 'as from the beginning, from the days when I appointed judges over my people Israel'. Now judges were appointed over that people from the time when they received the promised land, before kings had begun to reign over them. The son of iniquity – that is, the foreign enemy – certainly humbled Israel during those periods of time when, as we read, peace alternated with war; yet, in that age, longer times of peace are found than Solomon had, who reigned for forty years. For under that judge who is called Ehud there were eighty years of peace.¹⁰² God forbid, therefore, that we should believe that this promise is a prediction of the times of Solomon; still less, indeed, those of any other king whatsoever. For no other king reigned in such great peace as Solomon, and that nation never held the kingdom without some degree of anxiety that it might be subdued by enemies. For so great is the mutability of human affairs that no people is ever granted a security so great that it need never fear incursions hostile to this life. Therefore the place of this promised peaceful and secure habitation is eternal, and rightly belongs eternally to Jerusalem the free mother, where the true people of Israel shall dwell; for the name Israel is interpreted as 'Seeing God'. It is in the desire of this reward that we are to lead a godly life through faith during this miserable pilgrimage.

¹⁰¹ 2 Sam. 7,10.

¹⁰² Cf. Judg 3,30.

14 Of the care taken by David to arrange the psalms in a mystical order

In the progress of the City of God through the ages, then, David first reigned in the earthly Jerusalem as a foreshadowing of what was to come. Now David was a man skilled in song. He loved the harmony of music not for the sake of vulgar pleasure, but with a faithful will. For with it he served his God, Who is the true God, by the mystical representation of a great thing. For the rational and measured arrangement of diverse sounds in concordant variety suggests the compact unity of a well-ordered city.¹⁰³ Thus, almost all his prophecy occurs in the psalms, of which 150 are contained in what we call the Book of Psalms. Some consider that, of these psalms, only those inscribed with his name were composed by David. Others again suppose that none of them were composed by him except those which are marked 'Of David', and that those which have the words 'For David' in the title were composed by others on his behalf. But this latter opinion is refuted by the Saviour's own voice in the Gospel, where He says that David himself in spirit called Him Lord.¹⁰⁴ For Psalm 110 begins thus: 'The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at my right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool';¹⁰⁵ and, like many others, that psalm does not have 'Of David' in its title, but 'For David'. The more credible opinion, it seems to me, is that held by those who attribute all 150 of the psalms to David. These believe that he also attached the names of other men to some of them, in order to symbolise some pertinent aspect of the matter in hand; whereas he wished to have no man's name in the titles of the remainder: for he was inspired by the Lord in the disposition of this diverse material, which, though dark, is not meaningless. Nor should anyone be moved not to believe this by the fact that the names of certain prophets who lived long after the time of King David are read in the inscriptions of certain psalms in that book, and that things said there are presented as if spoken by them.¹⁰⁶ For the prophetic Spirit was not

¹⁰³ Cf. Cicero, *De rep.*, 2,42,69.

¹⁰⁴ Matt. 22,43f.

¹⁰⁵ Psalm 110,1.

¹⁰⁶ In the Septuagint, Psalms 137 and 145 to 150 are attributed to the prophets Haggai and Zechariah.

unable to reveal the names of these future prophets to King David as he prophesied, so that he might prophetically sing something which should be appropriate to their persons. For, in the same way, it was revealed to a certain other prophet that, after more than three hundred years, King Josiah would arise and reign; and this prophet foretold both his future deeds and his name.¹⁰⁷

15 Whether all the things prophesied in the psalms concerning Christ and his Church are to be included in the text of this work

But it is, I see, expected that, in this part of the book, I shall now expound the prophesies of David in the Psalms concerning the Lord Jesus Christ or His Church. Although I have already done this in one instance, however, I am prevented from doing what this expectation seems to require not, indeed, by a scarcity of material, but by its very abundance. For the need to avoid prolixity forbids my setting down everything; yet I fear that, if I choose to include only some things, I shall seem, to the many people who know these prophecies, to have passed over the more necessary. Besides, the testimony offered ought to be supported by the context of the whole psalm, at least to the extent of showing that there is nothing there to refute it, even if every detail does not support it. Otherwise, I might seem merely to be collecting at will short passages suitable to my purpose, like a patchwork of verses taken from a long poem found to have been written not on the same subject, but on something quite different.¹⁰⁸ In order to adduce such testimony, however, we should have to expound the whole of every psalm cited; and how great a task this would be can be seen from the works of other authors and in those works of mine where I have done it. Let anyone, therefore, read those works who wishes to and can do so; and he will there discover the large number and great significance of the prophecies of David, who was both king and prophet,

¹⁰⁷ Cf. 1 Kings 13,2.

¹⁰⁸ Augustine here has in mind a strange literary form, called a *cento*, which consists of a Christian poem composed by cobbling together lines and phrases lifted from the pagan poets. For example, a fourth-century Christian called Proba produced a life of Christ consisting entirely of material taken from Virgil's *Aeneid*.

concerning Christ and His Church: that is, concerning the King and the City which He has established.

16 Of those things pertaining to Christ and the Church which are said, either plainly or figuratively, in Psalm 45

Wherever literal and manifest prophetic utterances of any kind occur on any subject, they are invariably mixed with figurative statements; and it is these latter especially which oblige the learned to undertake the laborious task of discussion and exposition for the benefit of the slower-witted. Some such figurative utterances, of course, show us Christ and the Church at once, as soon as they are spoken, even though there are some things in them which, being less easily understood, remain to be explained at leisure. There is a case in point in the same Book of Psalms:

My heart is inditing a good matter: I utter my words to the king. My tongue is the pen of a scribe, writing swiftly. Thy form is beautiful beyond the sons of men; grace is poured out in Thy lips: therefore God hath blessed Thee for evermore. Gird Thy sword about Thy thigh, O Most Mighty. With Thy goodliness and Thy beauty go forward, proceed prosperously, and reign, because of Thy truth, and meekness and righteousness; and Thy right hand shall lead Thee forth wonderfully. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under Thee. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a rod of direction is the rod of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hast hated iniquity: therefore, God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of exultation above Thy fellows. Myrrh and aloes, and cassia from Thy vestments, from the houses of ivory: out of which the daughters of kings have delighted Thee in Thine honour.¹⁰⁹

Is there anyone, no matter how slow-witted, who does not here recognise the Christ Whom we preach, and in Whom we believe, when he hears that He is God, Whose throne is for ever and ever, and that He is anointed by God, as God indeed anoints not with a visible, but with a spiritual and intelligible chrism? For who is so

¹⁰⁹ Psalm 45, i ff.

ignorant of this religion, or so heedless of its fame, spread so far and wide, as not to know that Christ is named from this chrism: that is, from this anointing? But, having acknowledged that this King is Christ, let every one who is now subject to Him Who reigns by reason of truth, meekness and righteousness, inquire at his own pace into those other things which are here said figuratively: that His form is beautiful beyond the sons of men, with a kind of beauty which is to be loved and esteemed all the more because it is not corporeal; and what His sword, His arrows, and other things of that kind may be, which are set forth not literally, but symbolically.

Next, let him reflect upon Christ's Church, joined to so great a husband in spiritual marriage and divine love, of which it is said in these words which follow,

'The queen stood upon Thy right hand in vestments embroidered with gold, girded about with variety. Hearken, O daughter, and look, and incline thine ear; forget also thy people, and thy father's house. Because the King hath greatly desired thy beauty; for He is the Lord thy God. And the daughters of Tyre shall worship Him with gifts; the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour. The daughter of the King has all her glory within, in golden fringes, girded about with variety. The virgins shall be brought after her to the King: her neighbours shall be brought to Thee. They shall be brought with gladness and exultation: they shall be led into the temple of the King. Instead of thy fathers, sons shall be born to thee: thou shalt establish them as princes over all the earth. They shall be mindful of thy name in every generation and descent. Therefore shall the people acknowledge thee for evermore, even for ever and ever.¹¹⁰

I do not suppose that anyone is so foolish as to believe that it is some mere woman who is here praised and described: described, that is, as the wife of Him to Whom it is said, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a rod of direction is the rod of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity: therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of exultation above Thy fellows.' Clearly, this is Christ, anointed above Christians. For it is the Christians who are His 'fellows', out of whose unity and concord

¹¹⁰ Psalm 45, 10ff.

that 'queen' is formed who in another psalm is called 'The city of the great King'.¹¹¹

That queen is Sion, in the spiritual sense, which name in Latin means 'contemplation'; for she contemplates the great good of the world to come, because that is the goal towards which her struggle is directed. She is also Jerusalem in the same spiritual sense, of which we have already said many things. Her enemy is the city of the devil, Babylon, which means 'confusion'. Yet this queen among all nations is redeemed from that Babylon by regeneration, and passes from the worst king to the best: that is, from the devil to Christ. For this reason, it is said to her, 'Forget thy people and thy father's house.' Of that ungodly city those also are a portion who are Israelites only in the flesh and not by faith: enemies also of this great King Himself, and of His queen. For Christ came to them, but was slain by them; and so He has become instead the King of other men, whom He did not see in the flesh. Thus our King Himself says, through the prophecy of a certain psalm, 'Thou wilt deliver me from the strivings of the people; Thou wilt make me head of the nations. A people whom I have not known hath served me: in the hearing of the ear it hath obeyed me.'¹¹² This people of the Gentiles, therefore, whom Christ did not know when He was present in body, nonetheless believed in Him as Christ when He was proclaimed to them. And so it may rightly be said of them, 'In the hearing of the ear they have obeyed me', for 'faith cometh by hearing'.¹¹³ This people, I say, added to those who are the true Israelites both by the flesh and by faith, are the City of God: the City which gave birth to Christ Himself according to the flesh, when it consisted of those Israelites only. For thence came the Virgin Mary, in whom Christ assumed flesh that He might be man. And another psalm says of that City, 'And of Mother Sion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her, and the Highest Himself hath founded her.'¹¹⁴ Who is this Highest, if not God? And thus Christ, Who is God, before He was made man through Mary in that city, Himself founded it through the patriarchs and prophets. Thus, what we now see fulfilled was long ago said in proph-

¹¹¹ Psalm 48,2.

¹¹² Psalm 18,43f.

¹¹³ Rom. 10,17.

¹¹⁴ Psalm 87,5.

ecy to this queen, the City of God: 'Instead of thy fathers, sons are born to thee; thou shalt make them princes over all the earth.' For, truly, out of her sons have come forth her leaders and princes throughout all the earth, and the people, gathering together in her, confess her with the confession of eternal praise for ever and ever. What is expressed in the psalms, then, is often somewhat obscure and figurative; but, however it be understood, our interpretation must beyond doubt be consistent with those things which are very obviously true.

17 Of those things in Psalm 110 which relate to Christ's priesthood and, in Psalm 22, to His passion

In the psalm which we have just discussed, Christ is proclaimed as King. In the same way, he is in another psalm very clearly proclaimed as Priest. 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit Thou at my right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.' That Christ sits at the right hand of God the Father is believed, but not seen; that His enemies also are put under His feet does not yet appear. It is being accomplished, however, and it will appear at the end: what is now believed will indeed then be seen. Then come the words, 'The Lord will send forth the rod of Thy strength out of Sion: rule Thou in the midst of thine enemies';¹¹⁵ and the meaning here is so clear that to deny it would be not merely unbelief and faithlessness, but impudence indeed. For even our enemies confess that the law of Christ which we call the Gospel, and which we acknowledge as the rod of His strength, has been sent forth out of Sion. That He rules in the midst of His enemies is a fact attested by those same enemies over whom He rules; for they gnash their teeth and melt away, and have power to do nothing against Him.

Then, a little later, the psalmist says, 'The Lord hath sworn and will not repent' – and by these words he signifies that what he is about to add will be immutable – 'Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedek.' And who is permitted to doubt of Whom these words are spoken, given that there is now nowhere a priesthood and sacrifice according to the order of Aaron, and that, under the priesthood of Christ, men now offer the oblation which

¹¹⁵ Psalm 110, 1f.

Melchizedek presented when he blessed Abraham?¹¹⁶ Thus, matters which are expressed somewhat obscurely in this psalm are, when rightly understood, seen to refer to these manifest facts, as I have already shown in my sermons to the people.¹¹⁷

A further example occurs in that psalm where Christ speaks in eloquent prophecy of the humiliation of His passion, saying: 'They pierced my hands and feet; they counted all my bones. Yea, they looked and stared upon me.'¹¹⁸ By these words He indeed signified His body stretched out upon the Cross, with His hands and feet pierced and fastened by the striking through of the nails; and He signified also that He had in this way furnished a spectacle to those who looked and stared upon Him. He adds, 'They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture they cast lots'; and the Gospel story tells us how this prophecy was fulfilled.¹¹⁹ Then there are other sayings in the psalm which are less clear in their meaning; but these are rightly understood when they are interpreted in a manner consistent with those passages which shine forth with such great clarity. That this is quite plainly true is shown by the fact that other events, which we do not believe in as past, but behold as present, and which are beheld by the whole world, correspond exactly to the predictions which we read in this same psalm, made so long ago. For it is there said, a little later, 'All the ends of the earth shall remember, and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him; for the kingdom is the Lord's, and He shall rule the nations.'¹²⁰

18 Of Psalms 3, 41, 16 and 68, in which the Lord's death and resurrection are prophesied

The oracles of the psalms are by no means silent as to Christ's resurrection; for what other meaning can attach to what is sung, as if in His person, in Psalm 3: 'I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the lord sustained me?'¹²¹ Is anyone foolish enough to believe

¹¹⁶ Cf. Psalm 110,4; Gen. 14,18.

¹¹⁷ Cf. *Serm.*, 8,541ff.

¹¹⁸ Psalm 22,16f.

¹¹⁹ Psalm 22,18; Matt. 27,35; John 19,24.

¹²⁰ Psalm 22,27f.

¹²¹ Psalm 3,5.

that the prophet here wished to indicate to us, as if it were some great thing, merely that he had fallen asleep and woken up again? That sleep must stand for death, and that awakening for the resurrection; for the psalmist thought it fitting to prophesy Christ's death and resurrection in this way.

This is shown much more clearly in Psalm 41, where, as is often the case, prophecies of things to come are uttered in the person of the Mediator Himself, in the form of a narrative of past events. This was done because coming events had, in a certain sense, happened already, in the predestination and foreknowledge of God. He says: 'Mine enemies speak evil of me; When shall he die, and his name perish? And if he came in to see me, his heart spake vain things: he gathered iniquity to himself. He went out of doors and uttered it all at once. Against me all mine enemies whisper together: against me they do devise evil. They have planned an unjust thing against me. Shall not he that sleeps also rise again?'¹²² These words are certainly here put in such a way as to convey the same meaning as if He had said, 'Shall not he that has died then come to life again?' The previous words demonstrate that His enemies planned and contrived His death, and that this was done through one who came in to see Him and went out to betray Him. And does not the name of Judas, the disciple who became a traitor, occur to one here?

Thus, because they were about to do as they had plotted – that is, were about to kill Him – He showed that in their futile malice they would kill Him in vain, because He would rise again. Thus, He adds the verse in which He says, in effect, What are you doing, fools? What is a wickedness for you will be a sleep for me: 'Shall not he that sleeps also rise again?' In the following verses, however, He also indicates that they will not commit so grievous a crime with impunity, saying: 'Yea, the man of my peace in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me' – that is, hath trampled me under foot. 'But Thou, O Lord', He says, 'be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them'.¹²³ Who now would deny the truth of this interpretation, when he sees that, since the passion and resurrection of Christ, the Jews have been utterly cast down from their seats by the slaughter and destruction of war?

¹²² Psalm 41,5ff.

¹²³ Psalm 41,9f.

For after the Lord had been slain by them He rose again and requited them for the time being with temporal discipline: which will not, however, be merely temporal for those who have not repented when He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

For the Lord Jesus Himself showed the apostles that this Judas was His betrayer by handing him the bread;¹²⁴ and He thus recalled this verse of the psalm, and said that it was fulfilled in Himself: 'Yea, the man of my peace in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.'¹²⁵ But when He said, 'In whom I trusted', this was true of the body, not the head. In other words: the Saviour Himself was not ignorant of the identity of the man of whom He had already said, 'One of you will betray me' and 'One of you is a devil';¹²⁶ but it was His custom to transfer to Himself what is true of His members, and to attribute to Himself what belongs to them, for Head and Body are one Christ. Hence what is said in the Gospel: 'For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat',¹²⁷ which He explains by saying, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'¹²⁸ In the verse which we are here discussing, therefore, He attributes to Himself the trust that the disciples had reposed in Judas when Judas had become one of the number of the apostles.

Now the Jews do not suppose that the anointed one for whom they hope will be subject to death. For this reason, they do not accept that our Christ is the One whom the Law and the prophets announce. Rather, they have invented I know not what Messiah of their own, who is to be exempt from the suffering of death. And this is why, in their wondrous vanity and blindness, they contend that the words which we have quoted do not signify death and resurrection, but only sleep and awakening. But Psalm 16 also cries aloud to them, 'Therefore my heart is glad, and my tongue hath exulted; my flesh also shall rest in hope: for Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption.'¹²⁹ For who would say that his flesh had rested in hope,

¹²⁴ Cf. John 13,26.

¹²⁵ Cf. John 13,18.

¹²⁶ John 6,70f.

¹²⁷ Matt. 25,35.

¹²⁸ Matt. 25,40.

¹²⁹ Psalm 16,9f.

and that his soul, not being abandoned in hell, but straightway returning to the flesh, had raised it to life again, so that it should not suffer the usual corruption of corpses – who would say this but He Who rose again on the third day? The Jews certainly cannot say this of their prophet and king, David. And Psalm 68 also cries out to them, ‘Our God is the God of salvation, and to the Lord belongs the way of escape from death.’¹³⁰ What could be more clearly said than this? For ‘the God of salvation’ is the Lord Jesus, which is interpreted ‘Saviour’, or ‘Healer’. And the reason for this name was given when it was said, before He was born of the virgin, ‘And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins.’¹³¹ Because His blood was shed for the remission of sins, it was fitting that He should have no ‘way of escape’ from this life except through death. Therefore, when it was said, ‘Our God is the God of salvation’, it was straightway added, ‘and to the Lord belongs the way of escape from death’, in order to show that we were to be saved by His dying. But the words ‘and to the Lord belongs’ are uttered in wonder, as if to say: ‘This mortal life is such that not even the Lord Himself could leave it except through death.’

19 Of Psalm 69, in which the unbelief and obstinacy of the Jews are declared

But the Jews entirely refuse to yield to the testimonies of this prophecy, even when those testimonies are so manifest, and brought by events to so clear and certain a fulfilment. Therefore, that which is written in the psalm which follows is certainly fulfilled in them. For events belonging to His passion are prophetically described there in the person of Christ: ‘They gave me gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink’;¹³² and the meaning of this is made clear in the Gospel. Next, after such a feast and such a banquet has thus been presented to Him, He adds, ‘Let their table become a snare before them, and a retribution and a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not, and their backs be always

¹³⁰ Psalm 68,20.

¹³¹ Matt. 1,21.

¹³² Psalm 69,21; Matt. 27,34; 48.

bent',¹³³ and so on. This was not said as a wish, but as a prophetic prediction in the form of a wish. What wonder is it, then, if those whose eyes were 'darkened, that they see not' do not see even such manifest truths? What wonder is it if those whose backs are always bent, so that they bend down towards earthly things, do not behold the things of heaven? For these bodily images are to be understood as referring to vices of the soul.

But in order to keep this work within some bounds, let what we have said of the psalms – that is, of the prophecy of King David – now suffice. Let those who read this, and who are familiar with the whole subject, pardon me, and not complain if they know or believe that I have omitted instances which perhaps provide a stronger testimony.

20 Of the reign and merits of David and his son Solomon, and of the prophecies pertaining to Christ which are found both in the books associated with Solomon's writings and in those undoubtedly written by him

David, therefore, ruled in the earthly Jerusalem, a son of the heavenly Jerusalem. He is greatly praised by the Divine testimony because his sins were overcome by a piety so great, and a penitence of such wholesome humility, that he is undoubtedly among those of whom he himself speaks: 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.'¹³⁴ After him, there reigned over the whole of that same people his son Solomon, who, as was said above,¹³⁵ began to reign while his father was still alive. He made a good beginning, but a bad end; for 'Prosperity, which exhausts the spirits of the wise',¹³⁶ did him more harm than his wisdom brought him profit: that wisdom which, even now, is and ever shall be memorable, and which was then praised far and wide. He, too, is found to have prophesied in his books, three of which have been received into the authorised canon: namely, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the

¹³³ Psalm 69,22f.

¹³⁴ Psalm 32,1.

¹³⁵ Ch. 8.

¹³⁶ Sallust, *Catil.*, 11,8.

Song of Songs. There are, indeed, two others, one called Wisdom and the other Ecclesiasticus, which, by reason of a certain similarity of style, are also customarily attributed to Solomon. The more learned authorities have no hesitation in saying that they are not his; but the Church, and in particular the Western Church, has nonetheless received them as authoritative from ancient times.

In one of these, called the Wisdom of Solomon, the passion of Christ is prophesied most clearly. For surely it is His impious slayers who are there depicted as saying:

Let us lie in wait for the righteous, for he is displeasing to us, and contrary to our works; and he upbraideth us with our transgressions of the Law, and objecteth to our shame the transgressions of our discipline. He professeth to have the knowledge of God, and he calleth himself the son of God. He was made to reprove our thoughts. He is grievous for us even to behold; for his life is unlike other men's, and his ways are different. We are esteemed of him as counterfeits; and he abstaineth from our ways as from filthiness. He extols the latter end of the righteous; and he glorieth that he hath God for his Father. Let us see, therefore, if his words be true; and let us try what shall happen to him, and we shall know what shall be the end of him. For if the righteous be the son of God, He will undertake for him, and deliver him out of the hand of those that are against him. Let us put him to the question with contumely and torture, that we may know his reverence, and prove his patience. Let us condemn him to the most shameful death; for by his own sayings he shall be respected. These things did they imagine and were mistaken; for their own malice hath quite blinded them.¹³⁷

Again, in Ecclesiasticus the future faith of the nations is foretold in this fashion:

Have mercy upon us, O God, Ruler of all, and send Thy fear upon all the nations: lift up Thine hand over the strange nations, and let them see Thy power. As Thou wast sanctified in us before them, so be Thou sanctified in them before us, and let them acknowledge Thee, according as we also have acknowledged Thee; for there is not a God beside Thee, O Lord.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Wisd. 2, 12ff.

¹³⁸ Eccles. 36, 1ff.

This prophecy, in the form of a wish and a prayer, we see fulfilled through Jesus Christ.

But writings which are not included in the canon of the Jews do not have any great force when used against our adversaries. On the other hand, in the case of those three books which clearly are Solomon's, and which the Jews accept as canonical, laborious discussion is necessary to show that anything of this kind found in them refers to Christ and His Church. If such discussion were to be undertaken now, it would prolong our task beyond what is fitting. However, when we read, in the Proverbs, of ungodly men saying, 'Let us unrighteously hide in the earth the righteous man; yea, let us swallow him up alive like the grave, and let us take away his memory from the earth: let us seize his precious possession':¹³⁹ this is not so obscure that it may not be understood, without laborious exposition, as a reference to Christ and His possession the Church. Indeed, the parable of the wicked husbandmen in the Gospel shows that the Lord Jesus Himself said something of the same kind: 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.'¹⁴⁰

Again, there is a passage in the same Book of Proverbs upon which we have already touched when we spoke of the barren woman who 'hath borne seven'.¹⁴¹ Usually, as soon as it is uttered, those who know that Christ is the Wisdom of God understand this passage to refer to none other than Christ and the Church:

Wisdom hath builded her an house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars; she hath sacrificed her victims, she hath mingled her wine in the bowl; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens summoning to the bowl with excellent proclamation, saying, Whoso is simple, let him turn aside to me; as for him that wanteth understanding; she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled for you.¹⁴²

Here, we certainly recognise the Wisdom of God, that is, the Word, co-eternal with the Father, Who hath builded an house for Himself in the virgin's womb, in the form of a human body, and united the

¹³⁹ Prov. 1,11ff.

¹⁴⁰ Matt. 21,38.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Ch. 4.

¹⁴² Prov. 9,1ff.

Church with it as members are united to a head; Who hath sacrificed the martyrs as the Church's victims; Who hath furnished His table with wine and bread – the table at which also appears the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek; and Who hath invited the simple and him that wanteth understanding, because, as the apostle says, He 'hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty'.¹⁴³ But to those 'weak things' the Scripture goes on to say, 'Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding, that ye may have life.'¹⁴⁴ And to become a guest at that table is to begin to have life.

Again, in another book, called Ecclesiastes, it is said, 'There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink.'¹⁴⁵ And what interpretation of this could be more readily believable than that it refers to the sharing of this table which the Priest Himself provides, the Mediator of the new covenant according to the order of Melchizedek: the table furnished with His body and blood? For it is that sacrifice which has superseded all the sacrifices of the old covenant, which were offered as a foreshadowing of that which was to come. It is for this reason that we also recognise in Psalm 40 the voice of that same Mediator, saying in prophecy, 'Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; but a body hast Thou perfected for me';¹⁴⁶ for, instead of all those sacrifices and oblations, His body is offered, and served up to the partakers of it. The Book of Ecclesiastes often repeats, and many times commends, the sentence about eating and drinking; but, in doing so, it does not refer to feasts of carnal delight; and this is shown clearly enough when it says, 'It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting.'¹⁴⁷ And, a little later, it says, 'The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of feasting.'¹⁴⁸

But one ought, I think, especially to quote from this book a passage which relates to both cities, the one of the devil, the other of Christ, and to their kings, the devil and Christ: 'Woe to thee, O

¹⁴³ 1 Cor. 1,27.

¹⁴⁴ Prov. 9,6 (LXX).

¹⁴⁵ Eccles. 8,15.

¹⁴⁶ Psalm 40,6 (LXX).

¹⁴⁷ Eccles. 7,2.

¹⁴⁸ Eccles. 7,4.

land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning! Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, in fortitude, and not in confusion!¹⁴⁹ The devil is here called a child, because of the foolishness and pride and rashness and petulance and other vices which are apt to be so numerous at that age. But Christ is the Son of nobles: that is, of the holy patriarchs belonging to the free city, of whom He was begotten in the flesh. The princes of the other city 'eat in the morning' – that is, before a suitable hour – because they do not look forward to the proper felicity, which is the true felicity, of the world to come; for they desire to be made happy quickly, with the renown of this world. But the princes of the city of Christ wait patiently for the time of a blessedness which is not false. This is expressed by the words 'in fortitude, and not in confusion', because hope does not deceive them; for the apostle says, 'And hope maketh not ashamed.'¹⁵⁰ The psalm also says, 'For they that hope in Thee shall not be put to shame.'¹⁵¹

Again, the Song of Songs in truth celebrates a certain spiritual pleasure felt by the minds of the saints in the marriage of the King and Queen of that city: that is, Christ and the Church. But that pleasure is shrouded in allegorical veils, so that it may be desired all the more ardently, and all the more joyfully unveiled, and that the Bridegroom may be revealed, to Whom it is said in this same song, 'The upright love Thee';¹⁵² and the bride also, who hears, 'Charity is in thy delights.'¹⁵³ But we pass over many other things in silence, in our anxiety to bring this work to a close.

21 Of the kings who came after Solomon, both in Judah and in Israel

After Solomon, the other kings of the Hebrews are hardly found to have made any prophecies at all through any enigmatic sayings or deeds of theirs which might refer to Christ and the Church, whether in Judah or Israel. For these were the names given to the

¹⁴⁹ Eccles. 10,16f.

¹⁵⁰ Rom. 5,5.

¹⁵¹ Psalm 25,3.

¹⁵² Song of Songs 1,4.

¹⁵³ Song of Songs 7,7.

parts of that people when, because of the offences of Solomon, they were divided by God's vengeance from the time of Rehoboam his son, who succeeded his father in the kingdom. The ten tribes, indeed, which Jeroboam the servant of Solomon received when he was established as king in Samaria, were specifically called Israel, although that had formerly been the name of the whole people.¹⁵⁴ But two tribes, namely, Judah and Benjamin, remained subject to the city of Jerusalem for David's sake, lest the kingdom should be wholly sundered from his stock; and these were called Judah, because that was the tribe from which David had come. But Benjamin, the other tribe which, as I have said, belonged to the same kingdom, was that from which Saul had come before David. And, as we have said, these two tribes together were called Judah, and were distinguished by this name from Israel, which was the specific name by which the ten tribes were called when they had their own king. The tribe of Levi, because it was the priestly tribe, bound to the service of God, not of kings, was numbered as the thirteenth; for Joseph, one of the twelve sons of Israel, did not, like the others, found one tribe, but two, Ephraim and Manasseh. But the tribe of Levi nonetheless belonged primarily to the kingdom of Jerusalem, where the Temple of God was, which it served.

When the people were divided, therefore, Rehoboam, king of Judah and son of Solomon, reigned in Jerusalem, and Jeroboam, the servant of Solomon, reigned in Samaria as king of Israel. And when Rehoboam, like a tyrant, wished to persecute that divided part with war, the people were forbidden by God to fight with their brethren, Who told them through a prophet that He had done this.¹⁵⁵ In this way it was made clear that the division of the kingdoms had involved no sin on the part of either the king or people of Israel, but was, rather, done in fulfilment of the avenging will of God. This being known, the two parts made a peaceful settlement with each other; for it was not their religion which had been divided, but only their kingdom.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. 1 Kings 12, *passim*.

¹⁵⁵ 1 Kings 12, 24.

22 Of Jeroboam, who profaned the people subject to him by his impious idolatry; although God did not cease to inspire the prophets and to keep many men from the crime of idolatry

But Jeroboam, king of Israel, was perverse in mind; and he did not believe in God, even though God had proved Himself true in promising and giving him the kingdom. He was afraid lest, by coming to the temple of God which was in Jerusalem, where, according to the divine law, that whole nation was to come in order to sacrifice, the people should be seduced from him, and return to David's stock as to the royal seed. He therefore instituted idolatry in his kingdom, and deceived the people with dreadful ungodliness, ensnaring both himself and God's people in the worship of images. Yet God did not entirely cease to admonish, through the prophets, not only that king, but also his successors and imitators in ungodliness, and the people also. For the great and far-famed prophets Elijah and his disciple Elisha arose at that time, and indeed performed many wonders. And at that time also, when Elijah said, 'O Lord, they have slain Thy prophets, they have thrown down Thine altars; and only I am left, and they seek my life',¹⁵⁶ God answered him and said that there were seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to Baal.¹⁵⁷

23 Of the varying fortunes of each of the Hebrew kingdoms, until the people of both were at different times led away captive; Judah being afterwards restored to its kingdom, which eventually passed into the power of the Romans

Again, in the kingdom of Judah also, belonging to Jerusalem, prophets were not lacking during the times of its successive kings; and, according as it pleased God to send them, they made predictions as the need arose, or rebuked sin and taught righteousness. For there also, although much less so than in Israel, there arose kings who sorely offended God by their impieties; and these, together with the

¹⁵⁶ 1 Kings 19, 14.

¹⁵⁷ 1 Kings 19, 18; Rom. 11, 3f.

people who followed their example, were smitten with scourges in the proper measure. The merits of its godly kings were not small, however, and they are praised in Scripture. In Israel, on the other hand, we read that all the kings were more or less wicked. Each part, therefore, was both lifted up by prosperity and borne down by adversity of various kinds, as the divine providence either commanded or permitted. Also, they were afflicted not only by external wars, but also by civil wars with each other, in order that the mercy or anger of God might appear through the coming into being of certain causes. Then, as the indignation of God increased, that whole nation was not only cast out of its abode by the conquering Chaldeans, but also, and especially, carried over into the lands of the Assyrians. This happened first to that part of the thirteen tribes called Israel, but then to Judah also, when Jerusalem and her most noble temple were overthrown; and the people remained in captivity in those lands for seventy years. At the end of that time, they were sent forth from that place, and they restored the temple which had been overthrown. And, though many remained in foreign lands, yet the kingdom no longer had two parts, with two different kings over each. Rather, there was one prince over them, in Jerusalem; and, from every direction, wherever they were, and from whatever place they could, all men came at certain times to the temple of God which was there. Not even then, however, did they lack foreign enemies and conquerors; and, indeed, when Christ found them, they were already tributaries of the Romans.

24 Of the prophets: both those who came late in the
history of the Jews, and those mentioned in the
Gospel story as living at about the time of Christ's
nativity

But during the whole of that time after their return from Babylon, and after Malachi, Haggai, and Zechariah, who prophesied then, and Ezra, the Jews had no prophets down to the time of the Saviour's coming: except another Zechariah, the father of John, and his wife Elizabeth, when the birth of Christ was close at hand; and, after He was born, the aged Simeon, and Anna, a widow, now very old. Last of all came John himself, who, being a young man at the same time as Christ Himself was a young man, did not foretell that

Christ was to come; rather, by prophetic knowledge he pointed Him out when He was still unknown. It is for this reason that the Lord says, 'For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John.'¹⁵⁸ But the prophesying of these five is made known to us in the Gospel, where the Virgin Mother of the Lord is herself found to have prophesied before John did. But the wicked Jews do not accept this prophecy of theirs; whereas innumerable other persons have received it and, through it, have come to believe the Gospel. Then, Israel was truly divided into two, by that division which was foretold as immutable to King Saul by Samuel the prophet. But even the wicked Jews accept Malachi, Haggai, Zechariah and Ezra, recognising them as the last to have divine authority; for these also, few in number among the great multitude of the other prophets, have written books which have obtained canonical authority. And some of their predictions pertain to Christ and His Church. I see that these predictions ought to be included in this work; but it will be more appropriate to do this, with the Lord's help, in the next book, so that we may not burden this one, which is already too long, any further.

¹⁵⁸ Matt. 11, 13

Book xviii

I Of the events down to the time of the Saviour, as discussed in the previous seventeen books

I promised that, with the help of God's grace, I would first refute the enemies of the City of God, who favour their own gods above Christ, the founder of that City, and cruelly envy the Christians with a hatred pernicious above all to themselves; and this I did in the first ten books. Next, I undertook to write of the origin, progress and proper ends of the two cities, one of which, the City of God, dwells in the other, the city of this world, as far as the race of men is concerned, but as a pilgrim. But the promise to which I have just referred was threefold; and in the four books following the tenth I gave a digest of the origin of both these cities. Then, in one book, which was the fifteenth of this work, I dealt with their progress from the first man down to the Flood; and, next, our narrative pursued the course of the two cities down to the time of Abraham. It seems, however, that, from father Abraham down to the time of the kings of Israel, where we brought the sixteenth book to an end, and from then down to the coming of the Saviour in the flesh, which we reached at the end of the seventeenth book, my pen has dealt only with the City of God. Yet this City did not pursue its course in this world alone. On the contrary, just as both cities began together, so throughout the history of the human race have they undergone the vicissitudes of time together. I wrote in this way, however, because, until the revelation of the new covenant, the City of God ran its course not in the light, but in shadow; and so I wished to present the history of that city more plainly, by describing its course, without the obstruction of that other city which is its opposite, from the time when God's promises first began to be made clearer, down to His birth from the Virgin, in which those promises were at last fulfilled. Now, therefore, I see that I must repair my omission by touching, to whatever extent shall seem sufficient, upon the progress of that other city from the time of Abraham, so that those who read may compare both cities and observe the contrast between them.

2 Of the kings and dates of the earthly city,
corresponding to the dates of the saints, calculated
from the birth of Abraham¹

The society of mortals, then, was diffused throughout all lands; and, despite all diversity of place, was linked by a kind of fellowship of common nature, even though each section of mankind pursued devices and desires of its own. In this condition, not everyone, and perhaps no one, completely attains what he desires, because not all men seek the same end; and so mankind everywhere is generally divided against itself, and when one part is the stronger, it oppresses another. For the vanquished succumb to the victor, and inevitably prefer peace and survival at any price to power or even liberty. So true is this that it gives rise to great wonder when men prefer to perish than be slaves. For in almost all nations the voice of nature, as it were, has decreed that those who have suffered defeat should choose subjection by the victors rather than complete destruction by the devastation of war. Thus – and this does not happen without the providence of God, in Whose power it lies to determine who in war shall be subjugated and who shall subjugate them – certain peoples have been entrusted with kingdoms, while some have been placed under the rule of others. But the society whose goal is earthly advantage or desire – the city to which we assign the general name of ‘the city of this world’ – has been divided into a great number of kingdoms. And we note that, of these, two kingdoms have won a renown greatly surpassing that of all others: that of the Assyrians first, and then that of the Romans. These are ordered and distinguished in relation to one another in terms of both time and place. For the former arose earlier, and the latter later; the one in the East, and the other in the West. Again, the beginning of the one came immediately after the other’s end; and I should say that all other kingdoms and kings are like appendages to those empires.

Ninus, then, was already the second king of Assyria, in succession to Belus his father, the first ruler of that kingdom, when Abraham was born in the land of the Chaldees. There was also at that time the empire of the Sicyonians. This was a very small kingdom; but Marcus Varro, a man of enormous learning in all departments,

¹ In tracing the history of the ancient empires and their rulers, Augustine largely follows the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome.

begins his work called *De gente populi Romani* with an account of it, because of its antiquity. He begins with the kings of Sicyon and proceeds to the Athenians, and he comes then to the Latins, and then again to the Romans. But the kingdoms which he records before the foundation of Rome are inconsiderable in comparison with that of the Assyrians. Yet even the Roman historian Sallust concedes that the Athenians achieved the highest renown in Greece: more, however, by their fame than for their accomplishments. For he speaks of them as follows: 'The achievements of the Athenians', he says,

as I judge them, were ample and magnificent enough. They were, indeed, considerably less impressive than their reputation suggests. But because writers of great genius emerged in that city, the greatness of the Athenians' deeds is celebrated throughout the whole world. Thus, the virtue of the men who did those deeds is thought to equal the ability of writers of genius to extol them.²

In addition, this city acquired no small glory from literature and from her philosophers, because such disciplines were pursued there with exceptional vigour. But, as far as empire is concerned, there was no greater power in early times than that of the Assyrians, nor any diffused so far and wide. For it is said that King Ninus, son of Belus, subdued the whole of Asia as far as the frontiers of Lydia; and Asia is said to be a third of the entire world, although it is actually found to be as much as half the magnitude of the whole. Indeed, the only people of the eastern parts that he did not bring under his dominion were the Indians; and, after his death, war was waged even against these by Semiramis, his wife. Thus, it came to pass that all the peoples and kings in all those lands accepted the sway of the kings of Assyria and carried out whatever they commanded.

Abraham, then, was born in that kingdom, among the Chaldees, in the time of Ninus. But Greek history is much better known to us than Assyrian, and those who have traced the descent of the Roman people back to its origins in antiquity have followed a

² *Catil.*, 8,7ff.

chronological sequence down through the Greeks to the Latins, and thence to the Romans, who are themselves also Latins. Thus, we must give the names of Assyrian kings where necessary, in order to show how Babylon, the first Rome, as it were, pursues its course alongside the City of God on pilgrimage in this world; but the things which we must insert into this work for the sake of comparing the two cities, that is, the earthly and the heavenly, must be derived rather from Greek and Latin history, in which Rome herself is like a second Babylon.

When Abraham was born, therefore, the second kings were reigning, Ninus among the Assyrians and Europs among the Sicyonians; the first kings being Belus over the former people and Aegialeus over the latter. But when, after Abraham had departed from Babylon, God promised him that a great nation would come forth from him and that all the nations of the earth should be blessed in him, the Assyrians were then under their fourth king, and the Sicyonians under their fifth. For the son of Ninus reigned over the former after his mother Semiramis. It is said that she was slain by her son, because she, his mother, had dared to defile him by incestuous intercourse.³ Not a few suppose that it was Semiramis who founded Babylon;⁴ and she may, indeed, have rebuilt the city. But I have described in the sixteenth book when and how it was founded.⁵ Moreover, the son of Ninus and Semiramis, who succeeded his mother in the kingdom, is himself also called Ninus by some authorities, whereas others call him Ninyas, a name derived from that of his father. At that time, the kingdom of the Sicyonians was held by Telxion, whose reign was a time of such peace and happiness that, when he died, men worshipped him as a god, offering sacrifices to him and celebrating the games which they say were first established in his honour.

³ Cf. Justinus, *Epit. hist. philipp. Pomp. Trog.*, ed. Rühl and Seel, 1,2

⁴ *Ibid.*; Diodorus Siculus, 2,7.

⁵ Cf. Bk xvi,4.

3 What kings ruled over the Assyrians and Sicyonians at the time when Isaac was born according to the promise to Abraham, who was a hundred years old; and when the twins Esau and Jacob were born of Rebekah to Isaac himself, when he was sixty years old

During the time of Telxion, Isaac also was born, according to God's promise, when his father was a hundred years old. He was the son of Abraham and Sarah, Abraham's wife, who, because barren and an old woman, had by then relinquished all hope of offspring. At that time, the king of Assyria, the fifth, was Arrius. And to Isaac himself, when he was sixty years old, twins, Esau and Jacob, were borne to him by his wife Rebekah while their grandfather Abraham was still alive and 160 years old. Abraham died when he had completed 175 years, when the elder Xerxes, who is also called Balcus, ruled over the Assyrians, and Thuriacus – whose name some authorities write as Thurimachus – reigned over the Sicyonians. These were the seventh kings. Now the kingdom of the Argives, where the first king to reign was Inachus, arose at the time of Abraham's grandsons. Varro reports that it was the custom of the Sicyonians to sacrifice at the tomb of their seventh king, Thuriacus; and this is certainly something which should not be passed over in silence. Then, during the reigns of the eighth kings, Armamitres of the Assyrians and Leucippus of the Sicyonians, God spoke to Isaac and again gave to him the same two promises which he had given to his father: namely, the land of Canaan for his seed, and a blessing for all nations in his seed. And these same promises were given to his son, Abraham's grandson, who was at first called Jacob, and then Israel, at the time when Belocus, the ninth king, was reigning over Assyria, and Phoroneus, son of Inachus, was the second king of Argos, while Leucippus still remained as king of the Sicyonians. It was during these times that Greece achieved an increase in renown under Phoroneus, king of Argolis, thanks to the institution of certain laws and law-courts. Yet it was at the tomb of Phegous, a younger brother of this Phoroneus, that a temple was built after his death, in which he was to be worshipped as a god, and cattle sacrificed in his honour. I believe that they deemed him worthy of so great an honour because, in his part of the kingdom – his father

having distributed territories to both his sons, for them to rule over during his lifetime – he had established shrines for the worship of the gods; also, he had taught his subjects to mark the passage of time by months and years, and, to that extent, to measure and enumerate it. Wondering at these innovations of his, men who were still untutored believed, or wished to believe, that at his death he had become a god. For it is also said that Io was the daughter of Inachus: Io, who, afterwards called Isis, was worshipped in Egypt as a great goddess. Other writers, however, say that she came to Egypt from Ethiopia as queen, and that, because her government was both broad and just, and because she instituted many beneficial things, especially the art of writing, divine honours were accorded to her there after her death. Indeed, so great was the esteem in which she was held that anyone who said that she was a mere human being was declared guilty of a capital crime.

4 Of the times of Jacob and his son Joseph

When Baleus was the tenth king of the Assyrians and Messapus the ninth of the Sicyonians (the latter is also called Cephisus by certain authors: if, that is, the two names belong to one man, and those who use the second name did not rather confuse one man with another), and when Apis was the third king of Argos, Isaac died at the age of 180; and he left behind twin sons who were 120 years old. The younger of these, Jacob, belonged to the City of God, of which we are writing, while the elder had been rejected. Jacob had twelve sons; and, while their grandfather Isaac was still alive, one of them, called Joseph, was sold by his brothers to merchants travelling into Egypt.⁶ But, when he was thirty years old, Joseph was raised up from the humiliation which he had undergone, and stood before Pharaoh. This came to pass because, with divine aid, he had interpreted the king's dreams and foretold from them that there would be seven plenteous years whose abundance would be consumed by the seven barren years which were to follow.⁷ For this reason the king had released him from prison and set him over Egypt. It was because of the integrity of his chastity that he had

⁶ Gen. 37,27ff.

⁷ Gen. 41, *passim*.

been cast into prison; for he stoutly defended that chastity when he would not consent to commit adultery with his mistress.⁸ She had conceived an impure love for him, and she intended to tell a wicked lie to his credulous master; but he fled from her, even leaving his garment behind in her hand, as she caught him by it. Now in the second of the seven barren years, Jacob came to his son in Egypt, with all his household. He was then 130 years old, as he himself replied when questioned by the king;⁹ and Joseph was thirty-nine years old: that is, seven years of plenty and two of famine had been added to the thirty years of his age when he was honoured by the king.

5 Of Apis, king of the Argives, whom the Egyptians named Serapis and worshipped with divine honours

In those times, Apis, king of the Argives, sailed across to Egypt with his ships; and when he died there he became Serapis, the greatest of all the Egyptian gods. Varro gives a very simple account of why, after his death, he was no longer called Apis but Serapis. For because the coffin in which a dead man is placed, which all men now call a sarcophagus, is called *soros* in Greek, and because the people began to venerate Apis when he had been buried in his coffin, but before his temple was built, he was therefore first called Sorapis, from 'soros' and 'Apis'; and then, as commonly occurs, one letter was altered, and his name became Serapis. In his case also, it was decreed that anyone who should say that he had been a mere man should incur the penalty of death. This, in the estimation of Varro, is also the significance of the image found in nearly all the temples where Isis and Serapis were worshipped: the image which, with a finger pressed to its lips, seems to admonish us to silence, in order that nothing should be said of their having been human beings. On the other hand, that bull which the Egyptians, deceived by an astounding vanity, fed with abundant delicacies in his honour¹⁰ was called Apis, not Serapis, because they venerated it alive, without a sarcophagus. When this bull died, a calf of the same

⁸ Gen. 39,7ff.

⁹ Gen. 47,9.

¹⁰ Cf. Strabo, 17,1,31.

coloration was sought, that is, one similarly marked with certain white spots; and, when it was found, they believed it to be some kind of miracle, divinely procured for them. For it was no great task, for the demons who wished to deceive them, to show to a cow who had conceived and was pregnant the phantasm of a bull which only she could see, so that the mother's desire should induce the same markings to appear on the body of her offspring. This was how Jacob ensured the birth of lambs and goats of various colours, by the use of peeled rods;¹ and what men can achieve by means of colours and bodies demons can certainly accomplish very easily by exhibiting imaginary forms to animals at the time of conception.

6 The kings of the Argives and the Assyrians at the time of Jacob's death in Egypt

Apis, therefore, died in Egypt, though he was king not of the Egyptians, but of the Argives. His son Argus succeeded him in the kingdom; and it was from Argus that the people were called Argi, and, derived from this, Argives. For neither the land nor the people had borne this name under earlier kings. It was during the reign of Argus over the Argives, and of Eratus over the Sicyonians, and while Baleus was still king of the Assyrians, that Jacob died in Egypt at the age of 147. When he was at the point of death, he blessed his sons, and his grandsons by Joseph; and he most plainly prophesied Christ, saying in his blessing of Judah, 'The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until those things come which are laid up for him; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.'² It was during the reign of Argus that Greece began to make use of cereals and to have cornfields in cultivation, having imported seed from elsewhere. Argus also began to be regarded as a god after his death, and a temple and sacrifices were established in his honour. The same honour had also been accorded earlier in his reign to a private individual, a certain Homogyrus, who was struck by lightning, because he had been the first to yoke oxen to the plough.

¹ Gen. 30,37ff.

² Gen. 49,10.

7 The kings reigning at the time when Joseph died in Egypt

It was while Mammothos reigned as the twelfth king of the Assyrians, and while Plemmeus was the eleventh of the Sicyonians, and while Argus was still king of the Argives, that Joseph died in Egypt, at the age of 110. After his death, the people of God remained in Egypt for 145 years, and they were wondrously increased. They lived in tranquillity at first, until the death of those to whom Joseph had been known. Then, however, their increasing numbers aroused enmity and they became objects of suspicion; and so, until they were delivered from that land, they were borne down by persecutions and the rigours of intolerable slavery: in the midst of which, however, they were made fruitful by God's grace, and their numbers continued to multiply. Meanwhile, in Assyria and Greece the same kings remained on the throne.

8 The kings at the time of Moses' birth; and the gods whose religion arose at that same time

Therefore, when the fourteenth king, Saphrus, was reigning over the Assyrians, and the twelfth, Orthopolis, over the Sicyonians, and the fifth, Criasus, over the Argives, Moses was born in Egypt. It was through him that the people of God were redeemed from slavery in Egypt: a slavery which was nonetheless desirable for them, so that, through it, they might come to seek the aid of their Creator. Certain authors believe that Prometheus lived in the reigns of the kings just mentioned. He is said to have formed men out of mud;¹³ and this legend derives from his great stature as a teacher of wisdom, although we are not told who the wise men were who were alive in his times. His brother Atlas is said to have been a great astrologer;¹⁴ and from this fact comes the fable that he carries the sky.¹⁵ There is, however, a mountain bearing his name whose height seems a more likely explanation of the vulgar belief that he supports the heavens.¹⁶ Many other fables were first invented in the Greece of

¹³ Cf. Pausanias, 10,4,4; Horace, *Carm.*, 1,16,13ff.

¹⁴ Pliny, 7,56,203.

¹⁵ Cf. Hesiod, *Theog.*, 517ff, 746f.

¹⁶ Cf. Pliny, 5,1,5ff.

those days. Indeed, down to the time of Cecrops, king of Athens, during whose reign that city received its name and God led his people out of Egypt through the agency of Moses, several dead men were enrolled in the number of the gods by the blind custom and vain superstition of the Greeks.

Among these were Melantomice, wife of King Criasus, and Phorbas their son, who became the sixth king of the Argives after his father; also Iasus, son of the seventh king, Triopas, and the ninth king Sthenelas (or Stheneleus or Sthenelus; for various versions of his name are found in different authors). According to what is related in more vulgar writings, Mercury also is said to have lived at this time, the grandson of Atlas by his daughter Maia. He was noted for his skill in many arts, and he also imparted these to mankind; in recognition of which service men wished to make him a god after his death, or even believed that he was one. Hercules is said to have been later than Mercury, though still belonging to the time of the Argives. Not a few authors place him before Mercury in time; although these, I think, err. But, no matter at what time those two were born, weighty historians who have committed these ancient tales to writing agree that they both were originally men, and that they achieved divine honours because they conferred upon mortals many of the blessings which make this life more commodious.

Minerva, however, was far older; for she is said to have appeared as a maiden in the time of Ogygus, near the lake called Tritonis: it is for this reason that she is also called Tritonia. She was, no doubt, the inventor of many crafts, and was the more easily believed to be a goddess because so little was known of her origin. For the story of her birth from the head of Jupiter must be attributed to poets and storytellers, and not included among the facts of history. There is, however, no agreement among the historians as to when Ogygus himself lived, in whose time there also occurred a great flood: not that greatest flood of all, unknown to Greek or Latin history, from which no men escaped apart from those able to be in the Ark; but a greater than that which occurred subsequently, in the time of Deucalion. For Varro begins the book of which I made mention above with the reign of Ogygus; and he proposes no earlier starting-point from which to move towards the history of Rome than the flood of Ogygus: that is, the flood which occurred during the reign

of Ogygus. But our own people who have written chronicles – first Eusebius, and afterwards Jerome, who no doubt followed the opinions of certain earlier historians – record that the flood of Ogygus occurred more than three hundred years later, by which time Phoroneus, the second king of the Argives, was reigning. Regardless of Ogygus's dates, however, Minerva was already being worshipped as a goddess when Cecrops was ruling over the Athenians: the Cecrops during whose reign they say that the city of Athens was either re-established or founded.

9 When the city of the Athenians was established, and what explanation Varro gives of its name

Now the name of the city called Athens is certainly derived from that of Minerva, who is called Athene in Greek; and Varro gives the following explanation of why this is so. An olive tree had suddenly appeared there, and, in another place, water had gushed out; and these portents so disturbed the king that he sent to Delphic Apollo to ask how all this was to be understood, and what he should do.¹⁷ Apollo replied that the olive tree signified Minerva and the spring of water Neptune, and that it now rested with the power of the citizens to decide which of the two gods thus signified they would rather have their city named after. Having received this oracle, Cecrops called all the citizens together, male and female, to cast their votes; for it was then the custom in that place for women as well as men to take part in deliberations on matters of public concern. Now when the question was put to the multitude, the men voted in favour of Neptune and the women voted for Minerva; and the women were found to outnumber the men by one, and so Minerva won.

Neptune was angered by this, and laid waste the territory of the Athenians with sea-floods: for it is not difficult for demons to spread waters around in any quantity they wish. The same author says that in order to appease his anger the women suffered a threefold punishment. Never again were they to be allowed to vote; their children were never to take their mothers' name; and no one was ever again to call them Athenian women. And so that city, the

¹⁷ Cf. Apollodorus, 3,14,1; Herodotus, 8,55; Ovid, *Met.*, 6,70ff.

mother or nurse of liberal studies and of so many great philosophers than whom Greece had nothing more splendid and noble to show, was fooled by demons, and received the name of Athens because of a dispute between two of its gods, a male and a female, and from the victory of the female through the female vote. Then, when it was afflicted by the vanquished male, that city was compelled to avenge the victory of the victorious female, being in greater awe of Neptune's waters than of Minerva's arms. Thus, Minerva, though victorious, was herself defeated in the persons of the women who were thus punished; and she did not come to the aid of those who had voted for her. They had lost their power to vote; their sons were debarred from taking their mothers' names; and Minerva did not even secure for them the right to be called Athenian women, and to be rewarded by bearing the name of the goddess to whom their votes had brought victory over the male god! We could say a very great deal on this subject, were our discussion not about to pass swiftly on to other things!

10 Varro's account of the naming of the Areopagus, and of Deucalion's flood

Marcus Varro, however, does not wish to give currency to invented fables which dishonour the gods, for fear of endorsing any belief unworthy of their dignity. He therefore does not accept the story that the Areopagus, where the apostle Paul debated with the Athenians¹⁸ – the place from which the 'Areopagites', the councillors of that city, took their name – was so called because Mars, who is called Ares in Greek, was tried on that hill by twelve gods for the crime of homicide, and acquitted by six votes.¹⁹ For when votes were equally divided, the customary verdict was one of acquittal rather than condemnation. In opposition to this story, which is the one most widely believed, he endeavours to construct another explanation of the name, based upon his obscure literary knowledge. He does not wish us to suppose that the Athenians named the Areopagus from *Ares* and *pagus*, as if it were 'the hill of Mars'; for that would do injustice to the divine beings, to whom, he believes,

¹⁸ Acts 17.19ff.

¹⁹ Cf. Apollodorus, 3.14.2.

lawsuits and judicial decisions are alien. He asserts that what is said of Mars here is no less false than the tale told of the three goddesses, namely, Juno, Minerva, and Venus, who are said to have engaged in a contest of beauty, with Paris as the judge, for the prize of a golden apple. This story is enacted in song and dance, to the applause of the theatre, wherever games are held to appease the gods who take delight in the misdeeds, whether true or false, with which they are charged.

Varro does not believe such things, for fear of believing something which is at odds with the nature or character of the gods. Yet, while he gives an account of the name of Athens which is historical rather than fabulous, he nonetheless inserts into his writings the great law-suit between Neptune and Minerva, by whose name, rather than by Neptune's, that city was called. When those two competed against one another with a display of wonders, not even Apollo, when consulted, ventured to judge between them. Rather, to put an end to this quarrel between the divine beings, Apollo sent them to men for a verdict, just as Jupiter sent the goddesses just mentioned to Paris. In that court Minerva won by the votes, but was defeated in the punishment of the women who voted for her. She was able to exercise power in Athens over the men who were her adversaries, yet she could not obtain for her friends the title of 'Athenian women'! In these times, as Varro writes, when Cranaus, the successor of Cecrops, ruled in Athens – or, as our authorities Eusebius and Jerome think, while Cecrops was still king – there occurred a deluge which is called Deucalion's flood, because Deucalion ruled in those parts of earth where the greatest damage was done. This flood, however, certainly did not reach as far as Egypt and its vicinity.²⁰

11 At what time Moses led the people of God out of Egypt, and which kings were reigning at the time when Joshua, the son of Nun, who succeeded him, died

Moses, then, led the people of God out of Egypt at the very end of the reign of Cecrops, king of the Athenians, when Ascatades ruled

²⁰ Cf. Ovid, *Met.*, 1,262ff.

over the Assyrians, Marathus over the Sicyonians, and Triopas over the Argives. Having led the people out, Moses conveyed to them the Law which he had received from God on Mount Sinai. This Law is called the old covenant because it contains earthly promises, whereas the new covenant was to come about through Jesus Christ, and in this the kingdom of heaven was to be promised. It was fitting for this order to be preserved, just as it is preserved in the progress of each individual man towards God, so that, as the apostle says, 'That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.' For it is true, as he says, that 'the first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven'.²¹

Now Moses ruled the people in the desert for forty years, and died when he was 120 years old, having himself also prophesied Christ by the symbols of carnal observances in the tabernacle and priesthood, and in sacrifices and other ordinances full of mystic significance. Moses was succeeded by Joshua the son of Nun, who led the people into the promised land and established them there by God's authority, after he had overthrown the nations who then held those places. He ruled the people for twenty-seven years after the death of Moses; and he himself died when Amyntas was ruling as the eighteenth king of the Assyrians, while Corax was reigning as the sixteenth of the Sicyonians, Danaus as the tenth of the Argives, and Erichthonius as the fourth of the Athenians.

12 Of the rites of the false gods which the kings of Greece instituted during the period reckoned from the departure of Israel from Egypt down to the death of Joshua the son of Nun

During these times – that is, from Israel's departure out of Egypt down to the death of Joshua the son of Nun, through whom that people received the promised land – rites were instituted by the kings of Greece in honour of false gods. These rites commemorated the flood, the deliverance of mankind from it, and the tribulations of life at that time, when men migrated first to high ground and then returned to low. That, indeed, is the interpretation put upon

²¹ 1 Cor. 15,46f.

the ascent and descent of the Luperci along the Sacred Way.²² It is said that they signify the men who sought the mountain tops because of the floods of water, and returned again to the valleys when the floods abated. At this time, it is said, Dionysus, who is also called Father Liber, and who was regarded as a god after his death, revealed the vine to his host in the land of Attica.²³ Also at this time, musical festivals were established to appease the anger of Delphic Apollo, because they supposed that the lands of Greece had been afflicted with barrenness by him in his wrath because they had not defended his temple when it was burned by King Danaus during his invasion of those lands in war. They were indeed admonished by Apollo's oracle to institute such festivals. In Attica, however, it was King Erichthonius who was the first to institute festivals in honour of Apollo; and not only for him, but for Minerva also.²⁴ At these latter celebrations, the prize awarded to the winners was olive oil, because it was believed that Minerva discovered the fruit of the olive, and Liber that of the vine.

During these years, it is said that Europa was carried off by Xanthus, king of Crete (although we find different versions of his name given by some authorities), and that, as a result, Rhadamanthus, Sarpedon and Minos were begotten. The more common belief is that they are the sons of Jupiter by the same woman; but the worshippers of such gods accept the story that we have given – the one involving the Cretan king – as the historical truth, whereas they regard as a vain fable the tale of Jupiter which is sung by the poets, applauded in the theatre, and so much loved by the populace. For such a fable is merely a part of the theatrical displays intended to appease the divine beings by accounts, even false ones, of their own crimes.

During the same period, Hercules was held in high esteem in Syria; although there is no doubt that this was a different Hercules from the one of whom we have spoken above. Indeed, the more esoteric history says that there were a number of different individuals called Father Liber²⁵ and Hercules.²⁶ It is certainly the Syrian

²² Cf. Ovid, *Fast.*, 2,267ff.

²³ Apollodorus, 3,14,7.

²⁴ Cf. Apollodorus, 3,14,6.

²⁵ Cf. Diodorus Siculus, 3,82.

²⁶ Cf. Herodotus, 2,44; Diodorus Siculus, 3,73; Cicero, *De nat. deer.*, 3,16,42; Servius on Virgil, *Aen.*, 8,564.

Hercules to whom the twelve great labours were attributed (not including, however, the slaying of Antaeus of Africa, since that exploit belongs to the other Hercules).²⁷ It is this Hercules also of whom authors tell in their writings that he set fire to himself on Mount Oeta, because he was in the throes of a disease which he could not endure with the fortitude by which he had so often triumphed before.

Again, it was during this time that the king – or, rather, the tyrant – Busiris was sacrificing his guests to the gods. Busiris is said to have been the son of Neptune by Libya, the daughter of Epaphus. But, surely, we are not to believe that Neptune perpetrated so unchaste an act, lest we insult the gods! Let such stories be assigned to the poets and the theatres, so that they may propitiate the gods by means of them! It is said that the parents of King Erichthonius, at the very end of whose reign Joshua the son of Nun is found to have died, were Vulcan and Minerva.²⁸ But, because our adversaries also wish to say that Minerva is a virgin, they say that, while the two were struggling together, Vulcan, in his excitement, ejaculated, and his seed fell onto the ground; and the man born therefrom was given his name for that reason. For *eris* means 'struggle' in the Greek language, and *chthôn* means 'earth', and the name Erichthonius is a compound of the two.

It must, however, be confessed that the more learned authorities reject such stories and defend their gods against them. They consider that this absurd belief arose when an abandoned child was found in the temple shared by Vulcan and Minerva at Athens.²⁹ The child was wrapped in the coils of a serpent, signifying his future greatness; and because the temple was a shared one, and because the child's parents were unknown, he was said to be the son of the two deities. To be sure, it is the fable rather than the historical account that explains the origin of the name. But what is that to us? Let the latter account, presented in reliable books, instruct the religious; and let the other, presented in exhibitions of falsehood, give delight to impure demons. It is, however, those very demons whom religious men worship as though they were gods; and, though they may deny such stories about them, they cannot

²⁷ Cf. Apollodorus, 2,5,10

²⁸ Apollodorus, 3,14,6; Euripides, *Ion*, 20ff; 266ff.

²⁹ Pausanias, 1,14,5.

purge their gods of all guilt. For when plays are performed in which those same stories are wickedly enacted which are elsewhere prudently denied, this is done because the gods themselves demand it; and when such plays sing of the crimes of the divine beings, the gods are propitiated by such falsehoods and wickedness. Such stories may indeed be false; but to take delight in a false crime is a real crime.

13 What sort of imaginary fables arose during the time when the judges began to govern the Hebrews

After the death of Joshua the son of Nun, the people of God had judges as their rulers; and, in those times, they were in turns humbled by hardship for their sins, and consoled by prosperity through the mercy of God. In those times, the fable of Triptolemus was devised: that, at the command of Ceres, he was borne by winged serpents and bestowed grain on the needy lands over which he flew;³⁰ and of the minotaur, that a beast was shut up in the Labyrinth, and that, when men entered it, they could not get out, but wandered 'in an inextricable maze';³¹ and of the centaurs, that they were creatures combining the natures of horse and man; of Cerberus, the three-headed hound of the underworld; of Phryxus and his sister Helle, and how they flew on the back of a ram; of the Gorgon, who had serpents instead of hair, and who turned all who looked upon her to stone; of Bellerophon, that he rode on a flying horse with wings, called Pegasus; of Amphion, who by the sweet music of his lyre charmed the stones and drew them to him; of the craftsman Daedalus and his son Icarus, and how, having equipped themselves with wings, they flew; of Oedipus, that he compelled a certain monster called the Sphinx, a four-footed creature with a human face, to fling herself to her death when he solved the riddle which she used to ask, which she had thought insoluble; of Antaeus, whom Hercules slew, that he was a son of the earth, so that, when he fell to the earth, he always rose up stronger. And there are no doubt other such stories, which I have omitted.

Down to the time of the Trojan War, which is where Marcus Varro ends the second book of his work *De populi Romani gente*,

³⁰ Cf. Pausanias, 8,18,2; Ovid, *Met.*, 5,642ff.

³¹ Virgil, *Aen.*, 6,14ff; Ovid, *Met.*, 8,152ff.

these fables were devised by the ingenuity of men, taking advantage of the historical records which contain true accounts of events, but without attaching to them anything defamatory of the divine beings. After this time, however, comes the tale of Ganymede, the exquisite boy carried off to be Jupiter's lover: a crime committed by King Tantalus and attributed by the fable to Jupiter himself. Also, there is the tale of Jupiter contriving to lie with Danae by becoming a shower of gold: a story which, as we understand it, signifies the corruption of a woman's chastity by gold. Whoever devised such stories – whether fact or fiction, or facts concerning others and fictitiously attributed to Jupiter – presumed that there is in the hearts of men a degree of evil which it is impossible to describe; for they believed that men could endure such lies with patience. And men have, indeed, embraced them with joy. Surely, the more devout men are in their worship of Jupiter, the more severely ought they to have punished those who dared to say such things of him. Yet, far from being angry with those who devised such fables, they fear that the gods themselves will rather be angry with them if they do not act out such falsehoods in the theatres!

It was during these times that Latona gave birth to Apollo: not the Apollo of whom we spoke above, whose oracles were by custom consulted, but the one who, along with Hercules, was a servant to Admetus. Yet he is so firmly believed to be a god that the majority of men – indeed, almost all men – are of opinion that he was one and the same Apollo. At that time also Father Liber waged wars in India;¹² and had many women in his army, called Bacchae, who were more renowned for their madness than for their valour. Some authorities, indeed, write that Liber was conquered and made captive; and not a few say that he was slain in battle by Perseus, not omitting to mention his place of burial. Nonetheless, the Bacchanalian rites – or, rather, sacrileges – were instituted in his name, as if in the name of a god, by impure demons; and, many years later, the senate was so ashamed of the frantic obscenity of those rites that they forbade their performance in the city of Rome. In those same times, after the death of Perseus and his wife Andromeda, so strong was the belief that they had been received into heaven that

¹² Cf. Diodorus Siculus, 4,3.

men neither blushed nor feared to discern their likenesses in the stars, and to give their names to constellations.

14 Of the theological poets

During the same period of time there arose poets who were also called theologians,³³ because they composed poems concerning the gods: but concerning such gods as were men merely, albeit great men; or else they are elements of this world which the true God has made, or were established in principalities and powers according to their Creator's will and their own merits. It may be that, in the midst of all their vanities and falsehoods, those poets had something to say of the one true God. But they certainly did not serve Him truly when they worshipped Him in company with those others who are not gods, and when they offered to them the service which is due only to the one God; and even such poets as Orpheus, Musaeus and Linus were not able to abstain from disgraceful fables concerning the gods. It is true that those 'theologians' worshipped the gods: they were not worshipped instead of the gods; yet – and I do not know why – the city of the ungodly customarily places Orpheus at the head of the sacred, or, rather, sacrilegious, rites of the underworld. Again, the wife of King Athamas, who was called Ino, and her son Melicertes voluntarily flung themselves into the sea and perished; and they were raised to the rank of gods in the opinion of men, just as were those other men of that time, Castor and Pollux. The Greeks, indeed, call the mother of Melicertes Leucothea, whereas Latin authors call her Matuta; but both deem her a goddess.

15 Of the fall of the Argive kingdom, at the time when Picus, son of Saturn, first obtained his father's kingdom among the Laurentines

In those times, the kingdom of the Argives came to an end, and was transferred to Mycenae, whence came Agamemnon; and the kingdom of the Laurentines arose, in which Picus, son of Saturn,

³³ Cf. Herodotus, 2,53.

was the first to receive the kingship. This was when the judge among the Hebrews was a woman, Deborah; but the Spirit of God acted through her in this office, for she was also a prophetess. Her prophecy is not, however, clear enough for me to be able to demonstrate its reference to Christ without a lengthy exposition.³⁴

The Laurentines, then, were already ruling in Italy, and from their kings the Roman line of descent can be more clearly traced after the Greeks. However, the Assyrian kingdom still endured; and there Lampares was the twenty-third king when Picus began to be the first king of the Laurentines.

As for Saturn, the father of this Picus, let those who deny that he was a man note what is believed by those who worship such gods as these. Other writers say that he reigned in Italy before his son Picus, and Virgil also, in a better-known passage, says: 'He settled a race untamed, dispersed upon high mountains; he gave them laws, and chose a name, Latium, since he had once hidden [*latuisset*] safely upon those shores. The ages which passed beneath his rule are those called golden.'³⁵ Let these, however, be regarded as poetic fictions; and, instead, let us make it clear that the father of Picus was Sterces (some authorities call him Stercutius),³⁶ a farmer of great skill, who discovered that fields are made fertile by the application to them of the manure of animals, which is called *stercus* from his name. Moreover, whatever the reason for the decision to call him Saturn, it is clear that this Sterces or Stercutius was made a god for his services to agriculture. By the same token, the people have also received his son Picus into the number of such gods, and assert that he was a famous augur and warrior.³⁷ Picus begat a son, Faunus, the second king of the Laurentines; and he, too, either is or was a god in their estimation. It was before the Trojan War that they bestowed these divine honours upon dead men.

³⁴ Cf. Judges 4; 5 *passim*.

³⁵ *Aen.*, 8, 321ff.

³⁶ Cf. Macrobius (*Saturn.*, 1, 7), who calls him Stercutus.

³⁷ Cf. Virgil, *Aen.*, 7, 187ff.

16 Of Diomedes, who was made a god after the fall of Troy, and whose companions were believed to have been turned into birds

Then came the overthrow of Troy, whose destruction is everywhere sung and which is known even to boys, having become a matter of such widespread and common knowledge because of both its own magnitude and the outstanding skill of the authors who recorded it. This occurred during the reign of Latinus, son of Faunus, from whose time the kingdom began to be called the kingdom of the Latins, and the name 'Laentine' ceased to be used.

When the Greek victors left the destruction of Troy behind them and were returning to their own homes, they were torn and buffeted by various dreadful calamities; yet some of them, too, augmented the number of the gods. Indeed, even Diomedes became a god.³⁸ It is said that he was prevented from returning to his own people by a punishment divinely imposed upon him; and the transformation of his companions into birds is regarded not as a lying fable devised by the poets, but as an historical fact.³⁹ But though a god, as men suppose, he was not of himself able to restore his companions to their human condition; nor, being a newcomer to the society of heaven, did he obtain this favour from Jupiter his king. Yet his temple is on the island of Diomedea, not far from Mount Garganus, which is in Apulia; and they say that the birds which fly around the temple and dwell there display such marvellous devotion that they fill their beaks with water which they sprinkle on it. Also, when Greeks, or men descended from Greek stock, come to that place, the birds not only behave quietly, but even approach them affectionately; whereas if, on the other hand, they see men of other races, they fly at their heads and inflict upon them injuries serious enough even to kill them. For, it is said, they are well armed for these encounters with hard and large beaks.

³⁸ Cf. Pindar, *Nemean Odes*, 10,7; Strabo, 6,3,9f.

³⁹ Cf. Virgil, *Aen.*, 11,252ff; Ovid, *Met.*, 14,455ff.

17 Of the incredible transformations of men spoken of by Varro

To reinforce this fable, Varro mentions the no less incredible story of the celebrated witch Circe, who transformed the companions of Ulysses into beasts; and of the Arcadians who, chosen by lot, swam across a certain lake, were there changed into wolves, and lived in the desolate parts of that region in the company of similar wild creatures. But if they had not eaten human flesh after nine years, they swam back across the lake to be turned into human beings again. Finally, he mentions by name a certain Demaenetus, who tasted the sacrifice of a child which the Arcadians customarily made to the god Lycaeus. Demaenetus was changed into a wolf; but, ten years later, he was restored to his proper nature, trained as a boxer and won a victory at the Olympic Games. And the same historian also considers that the surname given in Arcadia to Pan Lycaeus and Jupiter Lycaeus can be due to no other reason than this transformation of men into wolves, which, it is supposed, can only be brought about by divine power.⁴⁰ For the Greek word for 'wolf' is *lykos*, and the name 'Lycaeus' is clearly derived from this word. Varro also says that the Roman *Luperci* originated from these mysteries, which were, so to speak, the seed from which they grew.

18 What we are to believe concerning the transformations which seem to befall men by the art of demons

Perhaps those who read these stories now expect us to say something of this great mockery perpetrated by the demons. But what can we say, except that we should 'flee from the midst of Babylon'?⁴¹ This prophetic admonition is to be understood in a spiritual sense, as meaning that we should flee from the city of this world, which is, of course, the society of ungodly angels and men: that we should go forward, by the steps of 'faith which worketh by love',⁴² until we find refuge in the living God. For, indeed, the greater the power we perceive the demons to have here below, the more tenaciously

⁴⁰ Pliny, 8,81f.

⁴¹ Is. 48,20.

⁴² Gal. 5,6.

should we cling to the Mediator through Whom we climb from the depths to the heights. For if I were to say that such things are not to be believed, there is even now no lack of men who will assert either that they have heard of instances of this kind which are most certainly genuine, or even that they have experienced such things themselves. Indeed, when I was in Italy, I myself used to hear of such cases from one region of that country. It was said that female innkeepers with knowledge of these wicked arts would, when they wished and were able to do so, administer drugs on a piece of cheese to travellers, who were thereupon turned into beasts of burden and used to carry articles of all kinds, returning to their original form only when they had finished their tasks. Yet their minds did not become bestial, but were kept rational and human. This is what Apuleius, in the work inscribed with the title *De asino aureo*, says, or pretends, befell him: that, having taken a potion, he became an ass, while retaining his human mind.

Stories of this kind are either untrue or so extraordinary that we are justified in refusing to believe them. We must, however, believe most firmly that Almighty God can do whatever He wishes, either to punish or assist us. By contrast, the demons can achieve nothing by means of any power belonging to their nature – a nature which was created angelic, but which has become malign by their own fault – except what God permits; and His judgments are often hidden, though never unjust. Demons do not, of course, create real natures. If they do indeed accomplish anything of the kind which we are here considering, it is only in respect of their appearance that they transform beings created by the true God, so that they seem to be what they are not. I do not therefore in the least believe that either the body or the soul can be transformed into the members and lineaments of beasts by the art or power of demons. Rather, I believe that a man has a phantom which, in his thoughts or dreams, assumes various forms through the influence of circumstances of innumerable kinds. This phantom is not itself a body; yet, with wondrous speed, it takes on shapes which are like material bodies; and it is this phantom, I believe, that can – in some ineffable way which I do not understand – be presented in bodily form to the senses of others, when their physical senses are asleep or suppressed. The actual bodies of the men in question are lying elsewhere, still living, indeed, but with their senses suspended in a

torpor far deeper and heavier than that of normal sleep. Meanwhile, the phantom may appear to the senses of others as being embodied in the likeness of some animal; indeed, a man may seem to himself to be in such a condition and to be bearing burdens, just as is sometimes seen to happen in dreams. But if these burdens are genuine objects, they are carried by demons to delude men, who perceive partly the actual bodies of the burdens, partly the false bodies of the animals.

For example, a certain man called Praestantius used to tell of what happened to his father when he took that same drug in a piece of cheese in his own home. He lay in bed as if sleeping, yet he could not by any means be awakened. After a few days, however, he woke up, Praestantius said, as if he had been asleep, and spoke of what had happened to him as if it had been a dream. Specifically: he had become a horse and, with other beasts of burden, had carried the grain supply which is called 'Rhaetic' – because it is sent to Rhaetia – to the soldiers. It was found that this had indeed happened just as he told it; yet it seemed to him to have been a dream of his own. Another man told how, in his own house, at night-time, before he retired, he saw a certain philosopher, whom he knew very well, coming towards him; and this philosopher expounded for him several problems in Plato which he had previously declined to explain when asked. When the same philosopher was asked why he had done something in the other man's house which he had declined to do when requested in his own, he said, 'I did not do it; but I dreamed that I did.' In this case, then, what one man saw in his sleep was exhibited to the other, while awake, by means of a phantasm.

These instances were not brought to our attention by sundry persons whom we should deem unworthy of trust, but by men whom we cannot believe to be liars. Hence, it seems to me that this phenomenon, which is spoken and written of so generally, could have happened – if, that is, it happened at all – in the way I have stated. This is true, at any rate, of the frequent transformation of men into wolves by the Arcadian gods – or, rather, demons; and also of 'Circe, who by her chanting changed the companions of Ulysses'.⁴³ But the birds of Diomedes are said to remain of the same

⁴³ Virgil, *Ecl.*, 8,70.

kind throughout successive generations; and therefore I do not believe that they came into being as a result of the transformation of men, but that they were substituted for men who had been spirited away, just as a doe was substituted for Iphigenia, the daughter of King Agamemnon.⁴⁴ For tricks of this kind could not have been difficult for demons who were permitted to perform them by the judgment of God; but because that maiden was afterwards found alive, it was easily realised that a doe had been substituted for her. The companions of Diomede, on the other hand, suddenly vanished and never again appeared in any place; for they were destroyed by avenging evil angels. And so it is supposed that they were transformed into those birds, which were secretly brought to that place from other parts of the earth where this kind of bird is found, and straightway substituted for them. As for the belief that the birds bring water in their beaks to sprinkle Diomede's temple, and that they are friendly towards men of Greek blood, but attack strangers: it is not to be wondered at that the demons urge them to do this; for it is to their advantage to persuade men to believe that Diomede became a god, in order to deceive them. For they wish men to do injustice to the true God by worshipping many false gods, and by serving dead men – who did not live truly even when they were alive – by means of temples, altars, sacrifices, and priests, all of which rightly belong to none save the one true and living God.

19 That Aeneas came to Italy at the time when Labdon presided as judge over the Hebrews

At this time, after the capture and destruction of Troy, Aeneas with twenty ships, in which the remaining Trojans were carried, arrived in Italy. Latinus was then reigning there, while Mnestheus was king of the Athenians, Polyphides of the Sicyonians, Tantanus of the Assyrians, and Labdon was judge of the Hebrews. Then, after the death of Latinus, Aeneas reigned for three years, while the same kings continued to reign in the places mentioned above, except that Pelasgus was by now king of the Sicyonians and Samson was judge of the Hebrews: Samson, who was so wondrously strong that he has been thought to be Hercules. But the Latins made Aeneas into

⁴⁴ Euripides, *Iph. in Taur.*, 26ff.

one of their gods, because he was not seen after his death.⁴⁵ The Sabines also enrolled their first king, Sancus, or, as some call him, Sanctus, among the gods. It was at this time also that Codrus, king of the Athenians, disguised himself and placed himself in the hands of his city's enemies, the Peloponnesians, to be slain by them; and he achieved his purpose. It is claimed that he saved his country in this way. For the Peloponnesians had received an oracle that they would gain victory only if they did not slay the Athenian king. Accordingly, Codrus deceived them by appearing in the dress of a pauper and by taunts provoking them to kill him.⁴⁶ Hence Virgil refers to 'the taunts of Codrus'.⁴⁷ The Athenians worshipped him too as a god, with sacrifices in his honour. When Silvius was the fourth king of the Latins – he was the son of Aeneas, not by Creusa, the mother of Ascanius, the third king of that country, but by Lavinia, daughter of Latinus: he was, as they say, Aeneas's posthumous son – Oneus was the twenty-ninth king of the Assyrians, Melanthus the sixteenth of the Athenians, and Eli the priest was judge over the Hebrews; and it was then that the kingdom of Sicyon came to end. It is said to have lasted for 959 years.

20 The order of succession of kings among the Israelites after the times of the judges

Shortly thereafter, at the time of the prophet Samuel, and while the same kings were reigning in the places just mentioned, the age of the judges came to an end and the kingdom of Israel had its origin in King Saul. At that time, then, those kings who are called Silvii began to reign over the Latins. The first king to be called Silvius was the son of Aeneas, and those who came after him kept this surname in addition to the personal names they were given, in the same way as, long afterwards, the successors of Augustus Caesar were surnamed Caesar. But Saul was rejected, and it was decreed that none of his stock should rule; and so, when Saul died, forty years after he had begun to rule, David succeeded him in the kingdom. At that time, after the death of Codrus, the Athenians ceased

⁴⁵ Ovid, *Met.*, 14, 581ff.

⁴⁶ Cf. Valerius Maximus, 5, 6.

⁴⁷ *Ecl.*, 5, 11

to have kings and began instead to have magistrates for the administration of their commonwealth. David also reigned for forty years and, after him, his son Solomon was king of Israel, who built the most noble Temple of God in Jerusalem. In his time, Alba was founded in Latium, and from then onwards the kings began to be called not kings of the Latins, but of the Albans, although they remained in the same Latin territory. Solomon was succeeded by his son Rehoboam, under whom the people were divided into two kingdoms, and each part then began to have kings of its own.

21 Of the kings of Latium, among whom Aeneas, the first, and Aventinus, the twelfth, were made gods

After Aeneas, who was made a god, Latium had eleven kings, none of whom was made a god. Aventinus, however, who was the twelfth king after Aeneas, was laid low in battle, and buried on the hill which is even now called by his name; and he was then added to the number of those gods which men have made for themselves. Some authors, indeed, have declined to write that he was slain in battle, saying instead that he disappeared, and that the hill was not named after Aventinus, but was called Aventine from the advent of birds (*ex adventu avium*). After Aventinus, no one was made a god in Latium except Romulus, the founder of Rome. But, between these two, we find two kings, of whom the first, to quote the words of Virgil, was 'Proculus the next, glory of the Trojan race.'⁴⁸ In his time Rome was already being brought to birth, so to speak; and so Assyria, that greatest of all kingdoms, now came to the end of her long history. For her power passed to the Medes after some 1,305 years, if we count from the time of Belus, the father of Ninus, who, as the first king, was content with a small dominion there.

Proculus⁴⁹ ruled before Aemilius. Now Aemilius had made his brother Numitor's daughter, named Rhea, a Vestal Virgin; she was also called Ilia, and was the mother of Romulus. The Romans wish to say that she conceived twins by Mars; for, in this way, they honoured, or excused, her unchastity. They offer as proof of this the legend that, after their exposure, the infants were suckled by a

⁴⁸ *Aen.*, 6,767.

⁴⁹ Augustine uses both spellings, Proculus and Procas.

she-wolf. For they hold that this species of animal belongs to Mars; and so, therefore, the she-wolf is believed to have offered her teats to the little children because she recognised in them the sons of Mars, her master. There is, however, no lack of people who say that, when the exposed infants lay wailing, they were first taken in by some unknown whore, and that hers were the first breasts they sucked – for ‘she-wolves’ (*lupae*) was the name given to whores, which is why houses of ill repute are even now called ‘wolf-houses’ (*lupanaria*). Afterwards, it is said, they came into the care of a shepherd called Faustulus, and were nurtured by his wife Acca. And yet if, in order to convict the man who was king, and who had cruelly commanded that these infants be cast into the water, God willed to help the children through whom such a great city was to be founded, and to have them rescued from the water by His divine intervention and suckled by a wild animal: is there anything very wonderful in this? Amulius⁵⁰ was succeeded in the kingdom of Latium by his brother Numitor, the grandfather of Romulus; and, in the first year of this Numitor, Rome was founded. That is why he ruled thereafter in company with his grandson, Romulus.

22 That Rome was founded at the time when the
kingdom of the Assyrians came to an end, and when
Hezekiah reigned in Judah

We shall not linger over details; but the city of Rome was founded as a kind of second Babylon; the daughter, as it were, of the former Babylon, through whom it pleased God to conquer the whole earth: to unite it in the society of a single commonwealth and its laws, and so to impose peace throughout its length and breadth. For there were at this time strong and mighty nations, accomplished in arms, nations who would not easily submit; and their conquest involved vast peril and no little destruction on both sides, and horrible toil. For at the time when the Assyrian kingdom subjugated almost the whole of Asia, although this conquest was achieved by war, it was possible to accomplish it without a great deal of cruel and difficult strife, because the nations were as yet unskilled in resistance, and were not as numerous or as great as they were later to become.

⁵⁰ Augustine uses both spellings, Aemulius and Amulius.

After all, at the time when Ninus subdued the whole of Asia except India, not much more than a thousand years had passed since that great and universal Flood, which only eight men had escaped in Noah's Ark. Rome, by contrast, did not so rapidly and easily subdue all those nations of East and West which, as we see, are now part of the Roman Empire; for she increased little by little, and, wherever she spread, she encountered robust and warlike peoples. At the time of Rome's foundation, then, the people of Israel had possessed the promised land for 718 years. The first twenty-seven of these belong to the time of Joshua the son of Nun, and the next 329 to the period of the judges. Then, 362 years passed from the time when there first began to be kings in that land. The king of Judah at this time was called Ahaz; or, according to another reckoning, it was his successor, Hezekiah. It is agreed that he was an excellent and most pious king, and he reigned at the same time as Romulus. Meanwhile Hoshea had begun to rule over that part of the Hebrew people which was called Israel.

23 Of the Erythraean Sibyl, who, among other things, is understood to have uttered many evident prophecies of Christ

According to some authorities, it was at this same time that the Erythraean Sibyl made her prophecies; although Varro asserts that there were a number of Sibyls, and not only one. This Sibyl of Erythraea certainly recorded some utterances which are manifestly references to Christ. I read these first in the Latin language, done into poor Latin verse with bad scansion: defects due, as I subsequently came to know, to the ignorance of their translator, although I do not know who he was. For that most distinguished man Flaccianus, who was also proconsul – a man of most ready eloquence and much learning – when we were speaking together of Christ produced a Greek manuscript, saying that it contained the poems of the Erythraean Sibyl. He showed me that, in the manuscript, the order of the initial letters in a certain passage was contrived in such a way as to form the following words: IESOUS CHREISTOS THEOU UIOS SOTER, which, in Latin, is, 'Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour'. These verses, whose initial letters give the sense

that we have just stated, run as follows, in a translation which someone has made into good metrical Latin poetry:

In sign of the judgment, the earth shall be bathed in sweat.
Ever more to reign, a king from heaven shall come,
Sitting in judgment here, upon all flesh and the world.
Our God shall unbelievers and the faithful see
Uplifted with his saints on high when this age ends:
Souls, clothed in flesh, shall come to Him for judgment.

CHoked with dense thorns, all the world lies untended;
Rejected are the idols and all the toys of men.
Every land, and all the sea and sky, shall burn with fire,
Invading even the dreadful gates of hell.
Salvation's light shall redeem the bodies of the saints,
Though the wicked shall burn in everlasting fire;
Obscurest acts shall be revealed, and each man's secrets told:
So shall God bring the secrets of all hearts to light.

THEN shall there be the sound of weeping and gnashing of
teeth;
Extinguished shall the sun be, and the dance of the stars stilled;
Our skies shall roll away, and the moon's splendour die;
Upraised shall all the valleys be, and the hills laid low

Until the world of men retains no eminence or high place.
In one flat plain lie all the hills, and the seas
Of blue shall be no more; and the earth perish, broken.
So too, all springs and streams shall be quenched by fire.

Sombre the trumpet then shall sound, and send forth its call
On high, mourning our wretched deeds and divers pains.
The earth gapes to show the vast gulf of Tartarus.
Each king shall come, one by one, before the Lord;
Rivers of fire and sulphur from the sky shall fall.⁵¹

When these lines were translated as well as might be into Latin from the Greek, it was not possible completely to render the original sense of the sequence of initial letters where the letter *upsilon*

⁵¹ *Oracula Sibyllina*, ed. F. Geffcken (Heidelberg, 1902), 8,217ff; cf. Lactantius, *Div. inst.*, 7,16,11; 20,3.

occurred in the Greek; for no Latin words beginning with that letter and suitable to the sense could be found. There are three such lines, the fifth, the eighteenth and the nineteenth. Thus, if we take the initial letters of all the lines in sequence, and if, instead of reading the actual first letters of those three lines, we substitute for them the letter *upsilon* as if it were indeed present there, the whole forms a sentence of five words: Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour; but this is only true when they are read in Greek, and not in Latin.⁵²

Also, there are twenty-seven lines here; and twenty-seven is the cube of three. For three times three is nine; and if the nine is multiplied by three – thereby adding the dimension of height to the figure's length and breadth – this comes to twenty-seven. Moreover, if you combine the initial letters of those five Greek words, *Iesous CHreistos THEou Uios Soter* – which, in Latin, is Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour – they form the Greek word *ichthys*, which means 'fish'; and this name is a mystic symbol of Christ, Who was able to remain alive – that is, without sin – in the abyss of this mortality, as if in the depths of the sea.

Now this Sibyl – whether the Sibyl of Erythrae or, as some prefer to believe, of Cumae – has nothing in the whole of her poem, of which this is only a very small part, pertaining to the worship of false gods, or of gods made by men. On the contrary, she speaks out against such gods and their worshippers so forcefully that she is, it seems, to be included among those who belong to the City of God. Again, Lactantius inserts into his work certain prophetic utterances of the Sibyl concerning Christ, although he does not explain which Sibyl. He presents them one by one; but I have thought it as well to set them down consecutively here, as if the many brief statements recorded by Lactantius formed a continuous whole. 'Hereafter', he says,

He will come into the wicked hands of unbelievers; and they will smite God with their unclean hands and spit forth venomous spittle from their filthy mouths. But He in his simplicity will give up His holy back to their lashes. And He will receive their blows in silence, so that none may know that He has come

⁵² The Latin equivalent of the Greek *upsilon* is Y, a letter with which, according to Lewis and Short's *Latin Dictionary*, no Latin words begin. The Latin version of the poem therefore does not fully preserve the Greek acrostic. It is easy enough to restore it in English, where the letter U stands for *upsilon*.

as the Word, or whence He comes, and so that He may speak to those in hell and be crowned with a crown of thorns. They have given Him gall for His food, and vinegar for His thirst: this is the table of inhospitality that they will display. For in your foolishness you have not recognised your God when He mocked the minds of mortals; but you have crowned Him with thorns indeed, and mixed for Him the horrid gall. But the veil of the temple shall be rent in twain; and at midday there shall fall the great darkness of night for three hours. And He will fall asleep and die the death for three days; and then He will be the first to return from the infernal regions and come forth into the light, showing the beginning of the resurrection to those who have been called back from the dead.⁵³

Lactantius introduced these Sibylline testimonies one at a time, at intervals in his discussion, as the points which he was seeking to prove seemed to require. I, however, have tried to arrange them in one connected series with nothing between them, and to distinguish them simply by capital letters – which copyists should not neglect to retain. Not a few authors write, however, that the Erythraean Sibyl existed not at the time of Romulus, but at that of the Trojan War.

**24 That the Seven Sages lived during the reign of
Romulus; and that, at the same time, the ten tribes
called Israel were led away captive by the Chaldeans;
and that the same Romulus was given divine
honours at his death**

It is said that Thales of Miletus lived during the reign of Romulus. He was one of the seven wise men who came after the 'theological' poets (of whom the greatest of all in nobility was Orpheus) and who were called *sophoi*, which in Latin is 'sages'. During the same time, the ten tribes which were called Israel at the division of the people were overcome by the Chaldeans and led away captive into their land. But the other two tribes, called by the name of Judah, remained in the land of Judea and had Jerusalem as the seat of their kingdom. On the death of Romulus, when he, too, had disappeared,

⁵³ *Div. inst.*, 4, 186, cf. *Oracula Sibyllina*, ed. Geffcken, 8, 287ff.

the Romans enrolled him among the gods; and this is very well known to everyone. This practice had ceased so completely by Cicero's time – and when it began again in the time of Caesar, it was simply a matter of flattery, not of genuine error – that Cicero considers it the highest tribute to Romulus that he won such honours not in rude and untutored times, when men are easily deceived, but in what was already an age of cultivation and learning, even though philosophy had not yet burst forth in all its intricate mass of subtle and acute loquacity.⁵⁴ But even though later times did not set up dead men as gods, they nonetheless did not cease to worship those set up by their forefathers, and to regard them as gods. On the contrary, they made vain and ungodly superstition even more enticing by adopting images, which the men of old did not possess; and this came about through the working of vile demons in their hearts, deceiving them by false oracles and in other ways also. Thus, even though fables of the crimes of the gods were no longer being invented in a more cultured age, the old tales were still being wickedly portrayed in their theatrical displays, in service to those false deities.

Numa reigned after Romulus; and he it was who supposed that the city needed the protection of a great number of gods, albeit false ones. He himself, however, did not win the honour of enrolment in that swarm when he died. It is as though he were thought to have packed heaven so tightly with a multitude of divine beings that he could find no place there for himself! It is said that the Samian Sibyl was contemporary with his reign at Rome, and also with the beginning of the reign among the Hebrews of Manasseh, the ungodly king who is reputed to have slain the prophet Isaiah.⁵⁵

25 What philosophers achieved distinction during the reign of Tarquinius Priscus over the Romans and Zedekiah over the Hebrews, at the time when Jerusalem was captured and the temple overthrown

After the overthrow of Jerusalem and the temple built by Solomon, when Zedekiah reigned over the Hebrews and Tarquinius Priscus

⁵⁴ Cf. Cicero, *De rep.*, 2, 10, 18.

⁵⁵ Cf. Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo*, 120, 14.

over the Romans, as successor to Ancus Marcius, the people of the Jews were led away captive into Babylon. For the prophets who rebuked the Jews for their iniquities and ungodly ways had foretold that this would come to pass: especially Jeremiah, who even specified the number of years of the captivity.⁵⁶ It was at that time that Pittacus of Mitylene, another of the Seven Sages, is said to have lived. And Eusebius writes that the other five, who, added to Thales, whom we have mentioned above, and this Pittacus, make up the number to seven, lived at the time when the people of God were held captive in Babylon. Their names are: Solon of Athens, Chilon of Sparta, Periander of Corinth, Cleobulus of Lindus, and Bias of Priene.⁵⁷ All these seven sages achieved distinction after the time of the 'theological' poets, because they outshone other men by virtue of a certain praiseworthy quality in their way of life, and because they reduced many moral precepts into sayings noted for their terseness. But they did not leave behind them any memorials of a literary kind – apart from the fact that Solon is said to have given certain laws to the Athenians. Also, Thales was a student of nature, and left books containing his doctrines. During the same period of the Jewish captivity Anaximander, Anaximenes and Xenophanes also distinguished themselves as students of nature; so too Pythagoras, from whose time such thinkers began to be called philosophers.

26 That at the time when the seventy years of the Jewish captivity was completed, the Romans also were delivered from the domination of kings

During this same time Cyrus, king of Persia, who also ruled over the Chaldeans and the Assyrians, somewhat relaxed the captivity of the Jews, and caused fifty thousand of them to return, to restore the Temple. But these only laid the foundations and set up an altar. For when their enemies harried them they were not able to carry forward the task of building by any means, and the work was delayed until the time of Darius. It was at this time that the things written in the Book of Judith took place; although it is said, indeed,

⁵⁶ Jer. 25, 11.

⁵⁷ Cf. Plato, *Protagoras*, 343.

that the Jews have not accepted that book into their canon. Under King Darius of Persia, therefore, when the seventy years foretold by the prophet Jeremiah were completed, the captivity was ended and liberty restored to the Jews. This was during the reign of Tarquin, the seventh king of the Romans; and, when he was expelled, the Romans themselves also began to be free from the tyranny of their kings.

Up to this time the people of Israel had had prophets; but, although there were many of these, the writings of only a few of them have been retained as canonical by the Jews and by ourselves also. When I brought my last book to a close I promised that I would present some account of these prophets in this present book; and I see that I must now do this.

27 Of the times of the prophets whose oracles we have in our books, and who many times foretold the calling of the Gentiles at the time when the Roman Empire began and the Assyrian fell

Let us, then, go back a little, so that we may examine the times of those prophets. At the beginning of the Book of the prophet Hosea, who is placed first of the twelve, it is written thus: 'The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.'⁵⁸ Amos also writes that he prophesied in the reign of Uzziah; and he adds the name of Jeroboam, king of Israel, who reigned at the same time.⁵⁹ Again, Isaiah, the son of Amos – whether he was the son of the prophet just mentioned or, as is more usually held, the son of another man of the same name who was not a prophet – also places at the beginning of his book the same four kings already named by Hosea, in whose days he says that he prophesied. Micah also records this same time, after the days of Uzziah, as the time of his prophecy. For he names the three following kings, named also by Hosea: Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.⁶⁰ We find, then, by the evidence of their own writings, that these three all prophesied at the same time.

⁵⁸ Hos. I, I.

⁵⁹ Amos I, I.

⁶⁰ Mic. I, I.

To them are added Jonah, during the reign of the same king, and Joel, when Jotham, who was Uzziah's successor, was ruling. But the dates of those two prophets can be found in the *Chronicon*,⁶¹ not in their own books, for they are silent as to their own times. Those times extend from Procas, king of the Latins, or his predecessor Aventinus, to Romulus, now a king of Rome, or even to the beginning of the reign of Numa Pompilius, Romulus's successor, inasmuch as Hezekiah, king of Judah, reigned up to that time. And so we see that these men erupted together, as it were, like two fountains of prophecy, at the time when the kingdom of the Assyrians failed and the Roman Empire began. Clearly, this came about so that, just as – in the first days of the Assyrian kingdom – Abraham appeared and to him were given the clearest promises that all the nations would be blessed in his seed, so – at the emergence of the Western Babylon, during whose rule Christ was to come, in Whom those promises were to be fulfilled – the lips of the prophets should be opened: those prophets who, not only in speech, but also in their writings, bore witness to this great future event. For though the people of Israel had hardly ever lacked prophets from the time when they had begun to have kings, those prophets had brought profit to them alone, and not to the Gentiles. When, however, prophetic writings with a more general application began to appear – writings which would bring benefit to the Gentiles also – it was fitting that this should occur at the same time as the foundation of that city which was to rule all the Gentiles.

28 Of those prophecies of Hosea and Amos which pertain to the Gospel of Christ

As to the prophet Hosea, then, what he has to say is as difficult to understand as it is profound; but we must take some part of his prophecy and include it here, in fulfilment of our promise. 'And it shall come to pass', he says, 'that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there they shall be called the sons of the living God'.⁶² The apostles also understood this as a prophetic witness to the calling of the people of the Gentiles, who did not

⁶¹ I.e. the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome.

⁶² Hos. 1, 10.

formerly belong to God.⁶³ And because the people of the Gentiles themselves belong spiritually to the children of Abraham, and for that reason are rightly called Israel, the prophet therefore goes on to say, 'And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together in one, and shall appoint themselves one headship, and shall ascend from the earth.'⁶⁴ If we were to attempt to expound this saying here, we should only spoil the flavour of its prophetic eloquence. Let us, however, recall that cornerstone and the two walls, the one made up of the Jews, the other of the Gentiles;⁶⁵ and let us acknowledge them, the one under the name of 'children of Judah', and the other under that of 'children of Israel', as both sustained by the same 'one headship', and as ascending from the earth.

Again, the same prophet testifies that the carnal Israelites who now refuse to believe in Christ will afterwards come to believe: that is, their sons will believe; for those unbelievers themselves will certainly go to their own place⁶⁶ when they die. He says, 'For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an altar, and without a priesthood, and without manifestations.' Who does not see that the Jews are now in this condition? But let us hear what he adds: 'And afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and shall be amazed at the Lord and at His goodness in the latter days.'⁶⁷ Nothing could be clearer than this prophecy, since the name of King David is understood as a symbol for Christ; for, as the apostle says, 'He was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.'⁶⁸ In the elevated fashion appropriate to such a prophecy, this prophet also foretold that Christ's resurrection would come to pass on the third day when he said, 'He will heal us after two days, and in the third day we shall rise again.'⁶⁹ In the same way, the apostle says to us, 'If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.'⁷⁰ Amos also

⁶³ Cf. Rom. 9,26.

⁶⁴ Hos. 1,11.

⁶⁵ Cf. Eph. 2,14; 20.

⁶⁶ Cf. Acts 1,25.

⁶⁷ Hos. 3,4f.

⁶⁸ Rom. 1,3.

⁶⁹ Hos. 6,2.

⁷⁰ Coloss. 3,1.

prophecies thus concerning such things: 'Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel; for lo, I am He that strengtheneth the thunder, and createth the wind, and announceth to men their Christ.'⁷¹ And in another place he says,

In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and build up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and build them up again as in the days of old: that the residue of men may inquire for me, and all the nations upon whom my name is invoked, saith the Lord that doeth this.⁷²

29 The prophecies of Isaiah concerning Christ and the Church

The prophet Isaiah is not in the Book of the Twelve Prophets who are called 'minor' because their discourses are brief in comparison with those called 'major' because of the length of the volumes which they composed. Isaiah is among these latter; but I take him in conjunction with the two discussed above because they all prophesied at the same time. Isaiah, then, condemned iniquity and gave instruction in righteousness; and, among his predictions of the future ills that were to befall the sinful people, he also included many more prophecies than the others did of Christ and the Church: that is, of the King and the City which He founded. So true is this that some commentators have called Isaiah an evangelist rather than a prophet.⁷³ But, in order to keep this work within reasonable limits, I shall here quote only one of many passages. Speaking, then, in the person of God the Father, he says:

Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider. Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up

⁷¹ Amos 4,12f.

⁷² Amos 9,11f.

⁷³ Cf. Jerome, *Praefatio in Isaiam* (*Patrologia Latina*, 24,18).

before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.⁷⁴

These things were said of Christ. Let us now hear what follows concerning the Church:

Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou

⁷⁴ Is. 52, 13ff.

shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of Hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called,

and so forth.⁷⁵ But let this be enough. There are not a few aspects of this passage which require exposition; but there is, I think, enough in it that is so clear that even our adversaries will be compelled to understand it whether they wish to or not.

30 Those prophecies of Micah, Jonah and Joel which apply to the new covenant

The prophet Micah, representing Christ in the figure of a great mountain, speaks as follows:

But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow into it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off.⁷⁶

This prophet also foretold the place in which Christ was to be born. 'But thou, Bethlehem', he says,

house of Ephrata, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. And he

⁷⁵ *Is.* 54, 1ff.

⁷⁶ *Mic.* 4, 1ff.

shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.⁷⁷

The prophet Jonah, however, prophesied Christ not so much by what he said as by certain things that he suffered. Indeed, he prophesied more clearly in this way than if he had proclaimed Christ's death and resurrection with his voice. For why was he received into the belly of the whale, and given back on the third day, except to signify that Christ would return from the depths of hell on the third day?

All the prophecies of Joel require many words of explanation in order to elucidate the sense in which they pertain to Christ and his Church. There is, however, one passage in particular which I shall not omit to mention: the one recalled also by the apostles, when, as Christ had promised, the Holy Spirit came down from above upon the company of believers. 'And it shall come to pass after these things', says Joel, 'that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions: and even on my servants and mine handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit'.⁷⁸

31 What predictions are found in Obadiah and Nahum and Habakkuk concerning the salvation of the world in Christ

Three of the minor prophets, Obadiah, Nahum and Habakkuk, say nothing of their own times; nor is the time when they prophesied found in the *Chronicon* of Eusebius and Jerome. To be sure, Obadiah is placed by them with Micah, but not in the passage where the date is noted when Micah is known from his own writings to have prophesied. This, I suppose, is due to the error of copyists negligently transcribing the works of others. But I have not been able to find mention of Nahum and Habakkuk in any of the copies of the *Chronicon* which we have here. Nevertheless, since they are included in the canon, it would not be proper for us not to consider them.

⁷⁷ Mic. 5,2ff.

⁷⁸ Joel 2,28f; cf. Acts 2,17f.

As far as his writings are concerned, Obadiah is the briefest of all the prophets. He speaks against Edom, that is, the race of Esau, the elder of Isaac's twin sons, the grandsons of Abraham: the one who was rejected. But if, by that figure of speech according to which a part stands for the whole, we take Edom as signifying the Gentiles, we can discern here a prophecy of Christ, when Obadiah says, among other things: 'But upon Mount Sion shall be salvation, and there shall be a holy place.' And a little later, at the end of his prophecy, he says: 'And those who are saved again shall come up out of Mount Sion, that they may defend Mount Esau; and it shall be a kingdom to the Lord.'⁷⁹ It is indeed clear that this was fulfilled when those saved from Mount Sion – that is, those from Judea who believed in Christ, and especially those acknowledged as apostles – went up to defend Mount Esau. How were they to defend it, except by bringing salvation to those who believed through the preaching of the Gospel, so that they might be saved from the power of darkness and brought over to the kingdom of God? This is expressed by the addition of the following words: 'And it shall be a kingdom to the Lord.' For Mount Sion signifies Judea, where it was foretold that there would be salvation and a holy place, which is Christ Jesus. Whereas Mount Esau is Edom, by which is signified the Church of the Gentiles; and, as I have explained already, the saved from Mount Sion defended it, so that it should be a kingdom to the Lord. This passage was obscure before the event: but what believer could fail to recognise its meaning after the event?

Now the prophet Nahum – or, rather, God speaking through him – says:

I will cut off the graven image and the molten image: I will make thy grave; for thou art vile. Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for now they shall not go on any more, to pass into old age. It is completed, it is consumed, it is taken away. He ascendeth who breathes in thy face, delivering thee out of tribulation.⁸⁰

Let all who remember the Gospel recall Who is it Who will ascend out of the underworld and breathe the Holy Spirit into the face of

⁷⁹ Obad. 17; 21.

⁸⁰ Nahum 1, 14f; 2, 1.

Judah: that is, of the Jewish disciples. For those whose feast-days are made new spiritually, so that they cannot pass into old age, belong to the new covenant. Moreover, it is by the Gospel that the graven images and the molten images, that is, the idols of false gods, have been cut off; and we already see them consigned to oblivion, as if to the grave. In this also we recognise the fulfilment of a prophecy.

Again, of what else are we to understand Habakkuk to be speaking in the following passage than the advent of Christ, Who was to appear in time to come? 'And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he that readeth these things may understand. For the vision is yet for a time appointed, and it will arise in the end, and not lie: if it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.'⁸¹

32 Of the prophecy contained in the prayer and song of Habakkuk

Again, in his prayer, combined with a song,⁸² to whom but the Lord Christ does Habakkuk say, 'O Lord, I have heard Thy speech, and was afraid; O Lord, I have considered Thy works, and was sore afraid?' For what is this but the inexpressible wonder of one who foresees a new and sudden salvation for men? 'Between the two living creatures thou shalt be recognised': what is this but either between the two covenants, or between the two thieves, or between Moses and Elias discoursing with Him on the mountain? 'While the years draw nigh, Thou wilt be recognised; at the coming of the time Thou wilt be shown': this requires no exposition. 'While my soul shall be troubled at Him in wrath, Thou wilt be mindful of mercy': what does this mean but that the prophet here speaks in the person of the Jews, to whose nation he belonged? For when, 'troubled at Him' in their great wrath, they crucified Christ, He was 'mindful of mercy', and said, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'⁸³

'God shall come from Teman, and the Holy One from the shady and close mountain.' Here, when it is said 'God shall come from

⁸¹ Hab. 2, 2f.

⁸² Hab. 3 (LXX) *passim*.

⁸³ Luke 23, 34.

Teman', this is interpreted by some translators as meaning 'from the south' or 'from the south-east', signifying midday: that is, the fervour of charity and the splendour of truth. 'The shady and close mountain' is indeed capable of being understood in several ways; but I prefer to take it as referring to the sublimity of the Divine Scriptures in which Christ is prophesied. For there are certainly many 'shady and close' passages in these Scriptures, to exercise the mind of the inquirer. But Christ 'comes from' there when He is found there by one who understands. 'His power covereth up the heavens, and the earth is full of His praise.' What is this but what is also said in the psalm, 'Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; and Thy glory above all the earth?'⁸⁴ 'His splendour shall be as the light.' What does this mean but that His fame shall illuminate those who believe? 'Horns are in his hands': what is this but the trophy of the cross? 'And He hath established a firm love for his strength' requires no exposition.

'Before His face shall go the word, and it shall go forth into the field after His feet.' What is this but that even before He came hither He was heralded, and after He had departed hence he was proclaimed? 'He stood, and the earth was moved': what is this but that 'He stood' to aid us, 'and the earth was moved' to believe in Him? 'He looked and the nations wasted away': that is, He had mercy, and made the people penitent. 'The mountains were ground down by His violence': that is, the pride of those who were lifted up was ground down by the power displayed in His wonders. 'The everlasting hills melted away': that is, were humbled for a time, that they might be raised up for all eternity. 'I saw his goings made eternal in return for his labours': that is, I perceived His labour of love to be not without its eternal reward. 'The tabernacles of the Ethiopians shall tremble with fear, and the tabernacles of the land of Midian': that is, even those nations not under the rule of Rome, smitten with sudden fear at the report of Thy wonders, shall become a Christian people.

'Wert Thou angry at the rivers, O Lord? Or was Thy fury against the rivers? Or was Thy rage against the sea?' This was said in order to show that He does not come now to judge the world, but so that the world may be saved through Him.⁸⁵ 'For Thou shalt mount

⁸⁴ Psalm 57,5.

⁸⁵ Cf. John 3,17.

upon Thine horses, and Thy riding shall be salvation': that is, Thine evangelists will carry Thee, and they shall be directed by Thee, and Thy Gospel will be salvation for those who believe in Thee. 'Bending, Thou wilt bend Thy bow against the sceptres, saith the Lord': that is, Thou wilt threaten even the kings of the earth with Thy judgment. 'The earth shall be cleft with rivers': that is, the preaching of those who proclaim Thee will, by its flowing in, open the hearts of men to confess Thee: the hearts of those to whom it was said, 'Rend your heart, and not your garments.'⁸⁶ What does 'the people shall see Thee and grieve' mean, except that they will be blessed by their lamentation?⁸⁷ What does 'scattering the waters as Thou goest' mean except that, walking amongst those who proclaim Thee everywhere, Thou wilt scatter the streams of Thy teaching on every side?

What does 'the abyss uttered its voice' mean, except that the depth of the human heart has declared what seemed good to it? The words 'The depth of its imagination' are a kind of explanation of the previous verse, for 'depth' is the same as 'abyss'. And 'its imagination' must be taken in conjunction with 'uttered its voice', meaning, as I have said, 'declared what seemed good to it'. Now the 'imagination' is indeed a vision which the heart did not cling to, did not conceal, but poured forth in confession. 'The sun was raised on high, and the moon stood still in her course': that is, Christ ascended into heaven, and the Church took her appointed place beneath her King. 'Thy darts shall go in the light': that is, Thy words shall not be sent forth in secret, but openly. 'Into the shining of Thy glittering spear': this must be taken in conjunction with 'Thy darts shall go.' For Christ had said to His disciples, 'What I tell you in the darkness, that speak ye in light.' 'By threatening Thou shalt diminish the earth'; that is, Thou shalt make men humble by Thy threats. 'And in fury Thou shalt cast down nations', for by Thy vengeance Thou shalt put down those who exalt themselves. 'Thou wentest forth for the salvation of Thy people, that Thou mightest save Thy Christ; Thou hast sent death on the heads of the wicked': nothing here requires explanation.

'Thou hast lifted up the bonds, even to the neck': these bonds can, indeed, be understood as the good bonds of wisdom, so that

⁸⁶ Joel 2,13.

⁸⁷ Cf. Matt. 5,4.

our feet may be put into its fetters, and our neck into its collar. 'Thou hast struck off in amazement of mind the bonds': that is, He has lifted up the good bonds, and struck off the evil ones (concerning which it is also said to Him, 'Thou hast broken asunder my bonds');⁸⁸ and He has done this 'in amazement of mind', that is, miraculously. 'The heads of the mighty shall be moved in it' – that is, in that 'amazement'. 'They shall open wide their mouths to bite, like a poor man eating secretly'; for some of the mighty among the Jews came to the Lord, in amazement at His deeds and words, and in hunger for the bread of His teaching; but, as the Gospel shows of them, they ate it in secret 'for fear of the Jews'.⁸⁹

'And Thou hast sent into the sea Thy horses, troubling many waters', which means nothing more than 'many people'; for it would not have come to pass that some were converted through fear, while others in fury persecuted them, if they had not all been 'troubled'. 'I gave heed, and my belly trembled at the voice of the prayer of my lips; and trembling entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself.' He gave heed to what he was saying, and he was terrified at his own prayer, which he had poured forth in prophetic fashion, and in which he had perceived things to come. For in the troubling of many peoples he saw the impending tribulations of the Church. Immediately he acknowledged himself as a member of that Church, and said, 'I shall rest in the day of tribulation', as one belonging to those who rejoice in hope and are patient in tribulation.⁹⁰ 'That I may ascend', he says, 'among the people of my pilgrimage', leaving behind, that is, the wicked people, his own carnal kin, who were not on pilgrimage on this earth nor seeking the celestial country. 'Although the fig tree', he says, 'shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall lie, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls.' He saw that the nation which was to slay Christ would lose its rich store of spiritual goods, which, in the manner of a prophet, he depicted figuratively, as earthly fruitfulness.

Now the reason why that nation suffered God's anger so sorely was that, not knowing the righteousness of God, they willed to

⁸⁸ Psalm 116,16.

⁸⁹ Cf. John 3,2; 19,38.

⁹⁰ Cf. Rom. 12,12.

establish their own in its place."⁹¹ For this reason, the prophet immediately goes on: 'Yet I will be glad in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and He shall stablish my feet to the end. He shall set me upon the high places, that I may conquer in His song.' What is meant here, of course, is the song of which something similar is said in the psalm: 'He hath set my feet on a rock, and directed my goings, and put into my mouth a new song, a hymn unto our God.'⁹² Thus, he who conquers in the Lord's song is one who pleases God by praising Him instead of praising himself, according to what is written: 'He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.'⁹³ Some versions, however, say, 'I will rejoice in God my Jesus'; and this seems to me to be a better reading than that proposed by those who, wishing to render the text into Latin, have not put that name which is for us more delightful and sweet to utter.

33 What Jeremiah and Zephaniah foretold with the prophetic spirit concerning Christ and the calling of the Gentiles

Jeremiah is one of the major prophets, like Isaiah, not one of the minor ones, like the others from whose writings I have now several times quoted. Now Jeremiah prophesied during the reign of Josiah in Jerusalem, when Ancus Marcius was king of the Romans, and when the captivity of the Jews was already nigh. He continued to prophesy until the fifth month of the captivity, as we learn from his own writings. Zephaniah, one of the minor prophets, is associated with him. For Zephaniah himself tells us that he prophesied in the days of Josiah, although he does not say for how long. Jeremiah, therefore, prophesied not only in the time of Ancus Marcius, but also in that of Tarquinius Priscus, whom the Romans had as their fifth king. For he had already begun to reign when the captivity came to pass.

Jeremiah, therefore, prophesying Christ, says: 'The breath of our mouth, the Lord Christ, has been taken captive in our sins',⁹⁴ thus

⁹¹ Cf. Rom. 10,3.

⁹² Psalm 40,2.

⁹³ 1 Cor. 1,31.

⁹⁴ Lam. 4,20.

showing, in this brief statement, that Christ is our Lord, and that He suffered for us. Again, in another place, he says, 'This is my God, and there shall none other be accounted of in comparison of Him; Who hath found out all the way of prudence, and hath given it to Jacob His servant, and to Israel His beloved: afterward He was seen on the earth, and conversed with men.'⁹⁵ Some authorities attribute this testimony not to Jeremiah but to his scribe, who was called Baruch; but it is more generally attributed to Jeremiah.

Again, the same prophet says concerning Christ,

Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise up unto David a righteous branch, and a King shall reign and shall be wise, and shall do judgment and justice in the earth. In those days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is the name which they shall call Him: Our righteous Lord.⁹⁶

He spoke also of the calling of the Gentiles which was to happen in time to come and which we now see to have been fulfilled. He says, 'O Lord, my God, and my refuge in the day of evils, to Thee shall the nations come from the utmost end of the earth, saying, Truly our fathers have worshipped lying images, wherein there is no profit.'⁹⁷ But the same prophet signifies that the Jews by whom it was fitting that Christ should be slain would not acknowledge Him; for he says, 'Heavy is the heart through all; and He is the man, and who knows Him?'⁹⁸ This prophet is also the source of the words which I have already quoted in Book xvii, concerning the new covenant, whose Mediator is Christ. For it is indeed Jeremiah who says, 'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel', and the rest of the passage which is to be read there.⁹⁹

I come next to the prophecies of Christ made by Zephaniah, who prophesied at the same time as Jeremiah. 'Wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, in the day of my future resurrection; for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms.'¹⁰⁰ And again, 'The Lord will be terrible upon them, and will furnish

⁹⁵ Baruch 3,36.

⁹⁶ Jer. 23,5f.

⁹⁷ Jer. 16,19.

⁹⁸ Jer. 17,9 (LXX).

⁹⁹ Bk xvii,3; Jer. 31,31.

¹⁰⁰ Zeph. 3,8

all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship Him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen.¹⁰¹ And a little later he says,

At that time I shall change the language for the peoples and His offspring, that they may call upon the name of the Lord and serve Him under one yoke. From the borders of the rivers of Ethiopia shall they bring sacrifices unto me. In that day thou shalt not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me: for then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain. And I will leave in thee a meek and humble people, and they who shall be left of Israel shall fear the name of the Lord.¹⁰²

This is the remnant of which there is a prophecy elsewhere, quoted by the apostle: 'Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved':¹⁰³ the 'remnant' being those of that nation who have believed in Christ.

34 Of the prophecies of Daniel and Ezekiel which are consistent with Christ and the Church

Now in the time of the Babylonian captivity itself, two more of the major prophets, namely Daniel and Ezekiel, first prophesied. Of these, Daniel even specified the number of years which were to elapse before Christ would come and suffer; but it would take too long to show here how he calculated this, and it has in any case been done by others before us. But he spoke as follows concerning Christ's power and His Church:

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Zeph. 2, 11.

¹⁰² Zeph. 3, 9ff.

¹⁰³ Is. 10, 22; cf. Rom. 9, 27.

¹⁰⁴ Dan. 7, 13f.

Ezekiel also, speaking prophetically in the person of God the Father, foretells Christ. He does so in the prophetic manner, presenting Him in the person of David because He took flesh from the seed of David; and because of this 'form of a servant',¹⁰⁵ in which He was made man, He is called the servant of God as well as God's son. He says: 'And I will set up one shepherd over them, even my servant David; and he shall feed them: he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them. I the Lord have spoken it.'¹⁰⁶ And in another place he says,

And one King shall be over them all: and they shall no more be two nations, neither shall they be divided any more into two kingdoms; neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, and their abominations, and all their iniquities. And I will save them out of all their dwelling-places wherein they have sinned, and I will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. And my servant David shall be king over them, and there shall be one Shepherd for them all.¹⁰⁷

35 Of the predictions of the three prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi

There remain three minor prophets who prophesied at the end of the captivity: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Of these, Haggai gives the plainest prophecy of Christ and the Church, in this brief verse: 'For thus saith the Lord of hosts: Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations shall come.'¹⁰⁸ We note that one part of this prophecy has already been fulfilled, whereas the fulfilment of its other part is awaited at the end. For God shook the heavens by the testimony of the angels and the stars when Christ became incarnate; He shook the earth by the vast miracle of the virgin birth; He has shaken the sea and the dry land now that Christ is being proclaimed both in the islands

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Phil. 2,7.

¹⁰⁶ Ezek. 34,23f.

¹⁰⁷ Ezek. 37,22ff.

¹⁰⁸ Haggai 2,6.

and in the whole world. Thus we see that all the nations are being moved to faith. But as to the statement which follows, 'and the desired of all nations shall come': this has reference to His final coming, to which we still look forward. For He could not be desired by those who looked forward to His coming until He was loved by those who believed in Him.

Speaking of Christ and the Church, Zechariah says, 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, thy King cometh unto thee. He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And His dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.'¹⁰⁹ We read in the Gospel of the fulfilment of this prophecy, when the Lord Christ made use of a mount of this kind on His journey; and part of this prophecy – as much of it as seemed sufficient in the circumstances – is quoted there.¹¹⁰ In another place, the prophet speaks to Christ in the spirit of prophecy of the forgiveness of sins through His blood. He says: 'As for Thee also, by the blood of Thy covenant I have sent forth Thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.'¹¹¹ What he wishes to be understood by 'the pit' is a question which can be answered in several ways, all according to right faith. It seems to me, however, that there is no better interpretation of it than to say that it represents the depths of human misery, dry, so to speak, and barren, where there are no streams of righteousness but only the mire of iniquity. To this, indeed, there is another reference in the psalm, where it says, 'And He led me forth out of the pit of misery, and from the miry clay.'¹¹²

Malachi foretells the Church which we now see propagated through Christ, when, speaking in the person of God, he says to the Jews in the clearest possible way,

I have no pleasure in you, neither will I accept an offering at your hand. For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and

¹⁰⁹ Zech. 9,9f.

¹¹⁰ Matt. 21,5.

¹¹¹ Zech. 9,11.

¹¹² Psalm 40,2.

a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord.¹¹³

This sacrifice we now see being offered to God in every place, through Christ's priesthood according to the order of Melchizedech, from farthest east to farthest west. By contrast, the Jews, to whom it was said, 'I have no pleasure in you, neither will I accept an offering at your hand', cannot deny that their sacrifice has ceased. Why, then, do the Jews still look forward to another Christ, even though this prophecy, which they read, and which they see fulfilled, could not have been fulfilled except through Christ Himself?

Then, a little later, Malachi, speaking in the person of God, says,

My covenant was with Him of life and peace; and I gave them to Him that he might fear me with fear, and be afraid before my name. The law of truth was in His mouth: directing in peace He hath walked with me, and hath turned away many from iniquity. For the Priest's lips shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at His mouth: for He is the angel of the Lord Almighty.¹¹⁴

Nor is it any wonder that Christ Jesus is spoken of as 'the angel of the Lord Almighty'. For just as He is called a 'servant' because of the 'form of a servant' in which He came to men, so He is called an 'angel' because of the Gospel which he proclaimed to men. For if we translate the Greek words, 'gospel' means 'good news' and 'angel' means 'messenger'. Indeed, Malachi says of Christ in yet another place: 'Behold, I will send mine angel, and He shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, Whom ye seek, shall suddenly come into His temple, even the Angel of the covenant, Whom ye desire. Behold, He cometh, saith the Lord Almighty. But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appear-eth?'¹¹⁵ In this passage he foretells both the first and the second coming of Christ: the first, that is, when he says that He 'shall suddenly come into His temple', that is, into His flesh, of which He says in the Gospel 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again';¹¹⁶ and the second when he says, 'Behold, He

¹¹³ Mal. 1, 10.

¹¹⁴ Mal. 2, 5ff.

¹¹⁵ Mal. 3, 4.

¹¹⁶ John 2, 19.

cometh, saith the Lord Almighty. But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appeareth?' And when the prophet speaks of 'the Lord, Whom ye seek' and 'the Angel of the covenant' this surely signifies that, according to the Scriptures which they read, even the Jews seek and desire the Christ. Many of them, however, have not recognised that He Whom they sought and desired has come, because they are blinded in their hearts by the preoccupation of their own merits.

When the prophet mentions a covenant – either in the earlier passage, where he says, 'My covenant was with Him' or here, where he calls Him 'the Angel of the covenant' – we must beyond doubt take this as a reference to the new covenant, in which eternal blessings are promised, and not to the old, which conferred merely temporal ones. Now most men, being weak and serving the true God only for the sake of such temporal blessings, assign great value to such blessings, and are troubled when they see the ungodly possessing them in abundance. It is for this reason that the same prophet distinguishes the eternal blessedness of the new covenant, which will be given to none save the good, from the earthly felicity of the old, which is often given to the wicked also. He says,

Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee? Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered. Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.¹¹⁷

And by that 'book of remembrance' is meant the New Testament. Next, let us hear what follows:

And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not. For,

¹¹⁷ Mal. 3,13ff.

behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts.¹¹⁸

The day spoken of in this passage is the day of judgment; of which, if God wills it, we shall speak more fully in the proper place.

36 Of Esdras and the Books of the Maccabees

After these three prophets, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, but during the same time – the time when the people were delivered from their servitude in Babylon – Esdras also wrote. He has been thought more of a historian than a prophet (and the same is true of Esther, whose book describes, in praise of God, events found to be not far distant from these times). But Esdras may perhaps be understood as prophesying Christ when he tells of the debate which arose among certain young men as to what it is that has the greatest influence on affairs.¹¹⁹ One said ‘kings’, another ‘wine’, and the third ‘women’, who in most cases hold sway over kings. But this same third speaker also demonstrated that truth is the victor over all things; and if we consult the Gospel we learn that Christ is the Truth.¹²⁰

From this time, after the restoration of the temple, it was not kings who ruled among the Jews, but princes, down to the time of Aristobulus. The record of their dates is not to be found in the Holy Scriptures which are called canonical, but in other writings, among which are the books of the Maccabees. These are received as canonical by the Church, though not by the Jews, because of the fierce and wondrous sufferings of certain of the martyrs who, before Christ came in the flesh, contended even unto death for God’s Law,

¹¹⁸ Mal. 3,17-4,3.

¹¹⁹ Esdr. 3,1ff; 4,1.

¹²⁰ Cf. John 14,16.

and stood fast even in the face of the most grievous and horrible afflictions.

37 That prophetic records are found which are more ancient than any source of Gentile philosophy

In the time of our prophets, then, whose writings had already come to the notice of nearly all the nations, the philosophers of the Gentiles, though they were later to be so prominent, had not yet begun to practise. This is true of those who were first called by that title, which arose with Pythagoras of Samos, who began to achieve distinction and fame at the time of the deliverance of the Jews from captivity; and it is still more true of those who came after them. Indeed, Socrates the Athenian himself, who was the master of all who achieved the greatest eminence at that time, and who held the highest distinction in that branch of philosophy called moral or practical, is found to come after Esdras in the *Chronicon*. Not much later Plato also was born, who was to surpass by far all the other disciples of Socrates. If we add to these the earlier thinkers also, who were not yet called philosophers – that is, the ‘Seven Sages’ and, after them, the natural philosophers who succeeded Thales and imitated him in their zeal for the study of things natural, namely Anaximander, Anaximenes and Anaxagoras, and many others before Pythagoras first professed to be a ‘philosopher’ – even these do not come before our prophets, considered generally, in respect of temporal priority. Indeed, Thales, after whom all the others came, is said to have attained eminence during the reign of Romulus, at the time when the river of prophecy burst forth from its source in Israel, embodied in those Scriptures which were to be diffused throughout the whole world. Thus, only the ‘theological’ poets, Orpheus, Linus, and Musaeus, and whatever others there were among the Greeks, are found to be earlier in date than those Hebrew prophets whose writings we hold to be authoritative.

But not even these poets came before Moses in time: our true student of God, who truly proclaimed the one true God, and whose writings are now the first in our authorised canon. For this reason, as far as the Greeks are concerned, in whose tongue the literature of this world flourished most greatly, they have no reason to boast that their wisdom, even if not superior to our religion, in which is

true wisdom, at any rate seems to be more ancient. It must, however, be admitted that there existed before Moses – not, indeed, in Greece, but among barbarous nations such as Egypt – some degree of learning which might be called their ‘wisdom’. Otherwise it would not be written in the holy books that ‘Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians’,¹²¹ as he certainly was; for, born in Egypt, and adopted and reared by Pharaoh’s daughter, he also received a liberal education there.¹²² But not even the wisdom of the Egyptians could have preceded in time the wisdom of our prophets; for Abraham himself was also a prophet. Moreover, what wisdom could there be in Egypt before the art of letters had been taught by Isis, whom the Egyptians, after her death, thought worthy to be worshipped as a great goddess? But Isis is said to have been the daughter of Inachus, who first began to rule over the Argives at a time when, as we find, Abraham’s grandsons had already been born.

38 Certain writings have not been admitted into the ecclesiastical canon by reason of their great antiquity, for fear that, through them, false rather than true things should be inserted

But, if we hark back to matters of far greater antiquity, our patriarch Noah certainly lived even before the great Flood; and I should be right to call him a prophet, since the very Ark which he built and in which he and his household escaped was a prophecy of our own times.¹²³ Again, is not Enoch, the seventh in descent from Adam, proclaimed as a prophet in the canonical epistle of the apostle Jude?¹²⁴ But, because of their very great antiquity, the writings of these men have not been received, either by the Jews or by us, as authoritative; it seemed proper to regard them with suspicion, for fear of putting forward the false as true. For some writings are indeed put forward as genuine works of those authors by certain persons who, according to their own inclination, indiscriminately

¹²¹ Acts 7,22.

¹²² Cf. Exod. 2,5ff.

¹²³ Cf. Heb. 11,7; 1 Pet. 3,20.

¹²⁴ Jude 14.

believe whatever they like. But the purity of the canon has not admitted these works, not because the authority of these men, who pleased God, has been rejected, but because the writings in question are believed not to be theirs. And it should not, indeed, seem a matter for wonder that writings put forward under so ancient a name are regarded with suspicion. For, in the history of the kings of Judah and Israel itself, the contents of which we believe to be historical on the authority of the same canon of Scripture, many things are mentioned which are not fully explained there: things which, it is said, can be found in other books written by the prophets, and in some cases the names of those prophets are not omitted; yet these books are not found in the canon which the people of God have received. I confess that the reason for this omission is unknown to me; except that, as I conjecture, even those authors to whom the Holy Spirit undoubtedly revealed things which were properly accorded religious authority may have written sometimes as men preparing a record of history and sometimes as prophets under divine inspiration. And the two kinds of writing were so distinct that it was judged proper to attribute the first kind to the authors themselves, while the other kind was to be ascribed, so to speak, to God speaking through them. Thus the one kind of writing had to do with the establishment of knowledge, and the other with religious authority. It is as embodying this authority that the canon has been carefully safeguarded; but, outside the canon, though works may now be put forward under the names of genuine prophets, they are of no value even as adding to our knowledge, since it is uncertain whether they are authentic works of the authors to whom they are said to belong. That is why no faith is placed in them; and this is especially true of those in which things are to be read which actually run counter to the faith as attested in the canonical books, so that it is immediately apparent that they do not belong among them.

39 Of the written characters of Hebrew which that tongue always possessed

Now it is not to be believed, as some have supposed, that it was only as a spoken language that Hebrew was preserved by Heber – from whose name the word ‘Hebrews’ comes – and that from him

it passed on to Abraham, whereas the written language began with the Law given through Moses. On the contrary, we should rather believe that the written language, together with its literature, was nurtured by that succession of fathers. Indeed, Moses appointed men among the people to teach them their letters, before they knew anything of the divine law in its written form.¹²⁵ Those persons are called in Scripture *grammatoeisagogoi*; and in Latin they can be called 'inducers' or 'introducers' of letters, since they in a certain sense induce, or introduce, letters into the minds of their pupils; or, rather, they introduce those whom they teach to letters.

In respect of the antiquity of its wisdom, therefore, let no nation set itself up in vanity over our patriarchs and prophets, in whom the divine wisdom dwelt. For not even Egypt, whose wont it is to glory falsely and idly in the antiquity of her learning, is found to precede the wisdom of our patriarchs in time with any kind of wisdom of her own. Indeed, no one will dare to say that the wondrous accomplishments of the Egyptians were attained before they learned their letters: that is, before Isis came and taught them there. Moreover, as for that memorable learning of theirs, which is called wisdom: in what did it consist except, chiefly, astronomy and other such disciplines which usually serve rather to exercise men's ingenuity than to illuminate their minds with true wisdom?

For as far as philosophy is concerned, which claims to teach something which may make men happy, studies of that kind rose to prominence in those lands at about the time of Mercury, who was called Trismegistus; and that, though long before the sages or philosophers of Greece, was nonetheless after Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, and, indeed, after Moses himself. For we find that it was at the time when Moses was born that the great astronomer Atlas lived, the brother of Prometheus, and the maternal grandfather of the elder Mercury, whose grandson was this Mercury Trismegistus.

40 Of the lying vanity of the Egyptians in ascribing to their wisdom an antiquity of 100,000 years

It is futile, therefore, for certain persons to babble with most vain presumption and say that Egypt has understood the pattern of the

¹²⁵ Cf. Exod. 18,21 (LXX).

stars for more than 100,000 years. For in what books could they have collected so much information, who learned the art of writing from their teacher Isis not much more than two thousand years ago? That is what Varro informs us, who is no mean authority in the field of history; and, moreover, his statement is not at variance with the truth of the Divine Scriptures. For since six thousand years have not yet elapsed since the creation of the first man, called Adam, why should not those people be rather laughed at than refuted, when they endeavour to persuade us that a period of time has passed so different and so contrary to the truth established by investigation? For how could we rely on a better chronicler of the past than One who also foretold the future as we now see it happening in the present? Indeed, the very disagreement of historians among themselves furnishes us with ample reason for believing the One whose account does not depart from the divine truth to which we hold. Moreover, the citizens of the ungodly city, scattered throughout all the earth, read works produced by men of the greatest learning, and see no reason for condemning the authority of any of them; yet such authors differ from one another in their treatment of events most remote from the memory of our own age, and they cannot discover which of them they ought to believe. We, on the other hand, pin our faith upon the divine authority belonging to our religion. Thus, we do not doubt that anything contrary to it is entirely false, no matter what else may be said in other works of secular literature: works which, whether true or false, offer nothing of moment to assist us in living a righteous and blessed life.

41 Of the discord of philosophical opinions, and the concord of the Scriptures regarded as canonical by the Church

But let us now leave aside historical knowledge and come to the philosophers themselves, from whom we digressed in order to discuss the matters dealt with above. In pursuing their studies with such labour, these philosophers do not seem to have had any other aim than to discover how we should direct our lives towards the attainment of happiness. How is it, then, that disciples have disagreed with their masters, and fellow-disciples with one another? Is this not because they conducted their search as men relying on

human senses and human reasoning merely? It could be, of course, that they were also driven by the desire for glory, which makes each man long to seem wiser and more acute than others and not to be simply dependent on the wisdom of another, but, rather, to be the discoverer of a doctrine and opinion of his own. On the other hand, I concede that not a few philosophers, or even most of them, broke with their teachers or fellow pupils simply from the love of truth, in order to seek out what they conceived to be true, whether it was so or not. But, in any case, what does it matter in what direction or way unhappy humankind sets out on its pursuit of happiness, if it is not guided by divine authority? As to our own authors, however: God forbid that they should disagree with one another in any way! For it is not for nothing that their works comprise the fixed and final canon of Sacred Scripture: the belief is rightly held – not simply by a few babblers wrangling idly in the schools and gymnasias, but by great numbers of people, in the country and in the towns, learned and unlearned alike – that when those authors wrote their works, God Himself was speaking to them, or through them. It was fitting that the authors themselves should be few in number, lest that which ought to be precious in our religion should be made commonplace by multitude; and yet not so few that there should be nothing wondrous in their agreement. For among the multitude of philosophers who have also left behind monuments to their teachings in their literary efforts, who will easily find any school whose members' beliefs agree in every respect? But it would take too long to show this in the present work.

Is there, however, an author of any philosophical sect whatsoever whose opinions are so completely approved in this city of demon-worship that all the others, who have advanced different and contrary beliefs, are rejected? Did not Athens have two flourishing sects: the Epicureans, who asserted that the gods take no interest in human affairs, and the Stoics, who held the opposite view, and argued that human affairs are under the rule and protection of the gods, the helpers and defenders of men? Again, I wonder at it that Anaxagoras was found guilty because he had said that the sun is a red-hot stone, and denied that it is a god;¹²⁶ for, in the same city, there flourished Epicurus, who enjoyed a glorious reputation and

¹²⁶ Cf. Diogenes Laertius, 2,8.

lived in safety, even though he not only refused to believe that either the sun or any other star is a god, but also contended that neither Jupiter nor any of the gods dwells in the world in such a way that men's prayers and supplications may reach him. Did not both Aristippus and Antisthenes dwell in Athens, both distinguished philosophers, and both followers of Socrates, who nonetheless located the highest goal of life in ends so different and contradictory that the former made bodily pleasure the supreme good whereas the latter asserted that man is made happy chiefly by the virtue of his mind? The one also said that the wise man should shun politics, while the other said that it is the wise man's duty to take part in the administration of the commonwealth; yet did not each of them recruit a band of disciples into his sect? Indeed, hordes of philosophers contended in public, each in favour of his own opinion, in the conspicuous and well-known Portico,¹²⁷ in the gymnasium, in gardens, and in places public and private. Some asserted that there is only one world, others that there are innumerable worlds; some that this one world came into being, others that it had no beginning; some that it will pass away, others that it will exist for ever; some that it is directed by a divine mind, others by fortune and chance. Some maintained that souls are immortal, others that they are mortal; of those who held that souls are immortal some said that they pass into animals, whereas others said that this is by no means so; while of those who held that souls are mortal, some said that they die soon after the body does, while others believed that they continue to live for a shorter or a longer time, but not for ever. Some established the final good in the body, others in the mind, and others in both, while still others added external goods to the mind and body. Some supposed that we should always rely upon the body's senses; but some said that we should not always do so, and others that we should never do so. These dissensions, and an almost uncountable number of others, exist among the philosophers; yet has any people or senate, any power or public authority in the ungodly city, ever assumed the task of adjudicating among all such diverse opinions: of pronouncing some of them worthy of approval and acceptance and others of rejection and condemnation? On the contrary, has not that city accommodated all

¹²⁷ I.e. the *Stoa* which has given its name to the Stoic school.

such controversies of men in its lap at random, without any judgment and discrimination? Yet these disagreements concern not land or houses or some dispute over money, but the things which bear upon the misery or blessedness of our lives.

Although some of what the philosophers have said is true, they are given just as much licence to say what is false; and so it is not in vain that the earthly city is given the symbolic name of Babylon; for 'Babylon' means 'confusion', as we remember having said already. And it does not matter to the devil, the ruler of that city, how the philosophers quarrel among themselves over their contradictory errors, since all of them alike deservedly belong to him already, because of their great and manifold ungodliness.

By contrast, that nation, that people, that city, that commonwealth, those Israelites, to whom the utterances of God were entrusted, certainly did not confuse false prophets with true ones by giving the same licence to each. Rather, those prophets who were in accord with each other and did not in any respect disagree were acknowledged and accepted by them as the true authors of Holy Scripture. These were their philosophers, that is, lovers of wisdom, their sages, their theologians, their prophets, their teachers of probity and godliness. Whoever believes and lives according to their teaching believes and lives not according to men, but according to God, Who has spoken through those men. If sacrilege is forbidden in their writings, it is God who has forbidden it. If it is said, Honour thy father and thy mother, God has commanded it. If it is said, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, and other things of the same kind, these commandments have been uttered not by human mouths, but by the oracles of God. Some of the philosophers were indeed able to perceive a certain amount of truth in the midst of all their false opinions, and they strove by painstaking discussion to persuade others that God made this world and that He Himself directs it by His most gracious providence. They spoke of the nobility of virtue; of love of country; of fidelity in friendship; and of good works and all the things which pertain to decent morals. Yet they knew not the end to which all these things are to be referred and the rule by which they are to be judged. In that City of ours, however, it was by prophecy – that is, by the divine voice speaking through men – that such things were commended to the people: they were not inculcated by controversy

and argument. And this was done so that anyone who came to know them should fear to despise that which was not the mere cleverness of man, but the utterance of God.

42 By what dispensation of God's providence the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament were translated from the Hebrew into Greek, so that they might be made known to all the nations

Even one of the Ptolemies, the kings of Egypt, wished to know and possess these sacred writings. For Alexander of Macedon, also called 'The Great', had acquired an empire of astonishing size but short duration. He subdued the whole of Asia, and indeed almost the whole world, partly by force of arms, partly by terror; and among other lands of the East he had entered Judea itself, and possessed it. After his death, however, his companions did not peaceably divide that most spacious kingdom among themselves, intending to possess it. Rather, they dissipated it in wars, and wasted it in wholesale destruction. The Ptolemies then began to be kings of Egypt; and the first of these, the son of Lagus, sent away many captives from Judea into Egypt. However, his successor, another Ptolemy, who is called Philadelphus, permitted all those who had been led away prisoner by his predecessor to return home as free men. Moreover, he sent royal gifts to the Temple of God, and petitioned Eleazar, who was then the high priest, to give him a copy of the Scriptures; for he had heard it said that they were certainly divine, and he desired to have them in the most noble library which he had founded. The high priest sent him a copy in Hebrew, and he then asked for translators. Seventy-two were given to him, six from each of the twelve tribes, men of great learning in the two languages, that is, in both Greek and Hebrew. It is their translation that, according to the usual custom, is now called the Septuagint. It is said that the agreement in their words was so marvellous, so amazing, as to be plainly divine in origin. For, though each of them sat in a separate place while engaged on the work – for it pleased Ptolemy to test their reliability in this way – they did not differ from one another in a single word, not even by a synonym conveying the same meaning, and there was no discrepancy even in the order of their words. There was such a unity in their

translations that it was as if there had been only one translator; for, truly, the one Spirit was present in them all. And they received so wondrous a gift of God precisely so that, by means of it, the authority of those Scriptures might be commended not as human, but as divine, to the Gentiles, who were to come to believe in Christ: a purpose which, as we see, has now been accomplished.

**43 Of the authority of the Septuagint translation,
which, with the exception of the Hebrew original, is
to be preferred to all other versions**

There have, of course, been other interpreters who have translated these sacred utterances from Hebrew into Greek: Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, for example. Also, there is a translation whose author is not known to us, and which, in default of a name, is called 'the fifth edition'. However, the Church has received the Septuagint as if it were the only translation. The Greek-speaking Christian peoples use it, and most of them do not know that there is any other. From this Septuagint a translation into Latin has also been made, to which the Latin-speaking churches adhere. Moreover, in our time has come the Presbyter Jerome, a most learned man and a scholar of all three languages; and he has translated these same Scriptures into Latin, not from the Greek but from the Hebrew.

Now the Jews acknowledge the accuracy of the fruit of his literary endeavours, and contend that the translators of the Septuagint were in many respects in error. Nevertheless, it is the judgment of the churches of Christ that no one person should be preferred to the authority of so large a body of men chosen for so great a work by Eleazar, who was then the High Priest. For even if it were not so clearly beyond doubt that one divine Spirit was present in them; and even if the seventy scholars had compared the words of their translations with one another, as men usually do, so that what pleased them all should stand: even then, it would not be proper to rely on any translator above them. But since so clear a sign of divinity has appeared in their work, it is evident that any other accurate translator of these Scriptures from the Hebrew into any other language whatsoever must agree with the Septuagint. Or, if he seems not to agree with it, we must believe that the highest expression of

prophetic meaning lies with the Septuagint. For the same Spirit that was in the prophets when they spoke was present also in the seventy men when they translated them; and the Spirit could have said something else also, with divine authority, as if the prophet had said both things, because it was the same Spirit Who said both. The Spirit could also have said the same thing in a different way, so that even though the words were not the same, the same meaning would still shine forth upon those who rightly understood them. He could also have omitted something, or added something, so that it might be shown in this way also that the work of translation was accomplished not by the mere human labour of one slavishly interpreting the words, but by the power of God filling and directing the mind of the translator.

Not a few scholars, however, have supposed that the Greek texts of the Septuagint translation need to be amended by reference to the Hebrew texts. But they have not ventured to remove readings in the Septuagint which the Hebrew version does not have. They have merely added what is found in the Hebrew but not in the Septuagint, showing the additions by putting certain signs in the form of stars, called asterisks, at the head of the verses in question. Similarly, words not shown in the Hebrew but appearing in the Septuagint they have indicated at the head of the verses by horizontal marks like those which we use as the sign for ounces. Many Latin texts also have these signs, and such texts have been widely diffused.¹²⁸

Without comparing both the Hebrew and Greek texts, however, we cannot identify those passages which, while not being omitted or added, are differently expressed: passages which either give another meaning, although one not at odds with the original, or which can be shown to express the same meaning, but in a different way. If, therefore, we see, as we should, nothing in those Scriptures other than what the Spirit of God has spoken through men, it follows that whatever is found in the Hebrew texts but not in the Septuagint is something which the Spirit of God chose not to say through the translators, but only through the prophets. Likewise, whatever is found in the Septuagint but not in the Hebrew texts is something

¹²⁸ No such texts have survived, and Augustine is our only authority for their existence.

which the same Spirit chose to say through the translators rather than through the prophets, thus showing that both the former and the latter were prophets. For, in the same way, the Spirit said some things through Isaiah, others through Jeremiah, others through one prophet or another, as He chose; or He said the same things, differently expressed, through this prophet or that. Moreover, whatever is found in both the Hebrew and the Septuagint is something which one and the same Spirit wished to say through both, but in such a way that the former took the lead by prophesying, while the latter followed with a prophetic translation. For just as the one Spirit of peace was present in the prophets when they spoke the truth with no disagreement, so also was the same one Spirit present in the seventy translators when, without consulting one another, they still translated the whole as if with one voice.

44 How we are to understand the threatened
destruction of the people of Nineveh; for the period
of forty days mentioned in the Hebrew version is
reduced to three in the Septuagint

But someone will say, 'How am I to understand what the prophet Jonah said to the people of Nineveh? Was it 'In three days shall Nineveh be overthrown' or 'in forty days'?'¹²⁹ For who does not see that the prophet sent to bring terror to that city with the threat of imminent destruction could not have said both? If it was to be destroyed on the third day, it clearly could not also be destroyed on the fortieth; and if on the fortieth, clearly not on the third. If, therefore, someone asks me which of these things Jonah said, I suppose that it was rather what we read in the Hebrew, 'In forty days shall Nineveh be overthrown.' Yet the translators of the Septuagint, working so long afterwards, were able to say something else, yet something pertinent, and conveying exactly the same sense, though with another kind of significance. And this was to admonish the reader not to hold the authority of either version in low esteem, but to raise himself above mere history and to seek out the meanings which the historical narrative was intended to convey. These things

¹²⁹ Jonah 3,4: the Hebrew text gives forty days, the Septuagint three.

did indeed occur in the city of Nineveh, but they also had another meaning, going beyond the bounds of that city. In the same way, though the prophet himself was indeed in the belly of the whale for three days, he nonetheless also signified someone else: the Lord of all prophets, who was to be three days in the depths of hell. Therefore, if the city of Nineveh is rightly understood as standing prophetically for the Church of the Gentiles as 'overthrown' – through penitence, that is – so that it was no longer what it had been; then, since this was done by Christ in the Church of the Gentiles, prefigured by Nineveh, it is Christ Himself who is signified in both the forty and the three days. He is signified in the forty days, because he spent forty days with His disciples after His resurrection, and then ascended into Heaven; and in the three days because He rose again on the third day. It is as if the seventy translators were rousing from sleep the reader who wishes to adhere to the facts of history merely; and it is as if the prophets were also appealing to such a reader to search the depths of prophecy. It is as if they were saying, 'Seek in the forty days Him in Whom you will be able to find the three days also. You will find the former in His ascension, the latter in His resurrection.' Thus, it was possible by both these numbers to convey a meaning most aptly, the one being given through the mouth of the prophet Jonah, and the other through the prophecy of the seventy translators, yet both being the utterance of one and the same Spirit. I wish to avoid a lengthy treatment of this matter, however; and so I shall not demonstrate it by referring to the many instances where the Septuagint translation is thought to be discrepant with the truth of the Hebrew text, and yet is found concordant with it when rightly understood. Hence even I, in my small measure, follow in the footsteps of the apostles; for they themselves quoted prophetic testimonies from both – that is, from both the Hebrew and the Septuagint; and I have deemed it right to make use of both as authorities, since both are one, and both divine. But now let us carry on as best we can with what is left of our task.

45 That the Jews ceased to have prophets after the restoration of the temple, and from that time until the birth of Christ were afflicted with ceaseless adversity, to show that the building of another temple had been promised by the voices of the prophets

After the Jewish people had begun to be without prophets, there is no doubt that their condition grew worse: and this at the very time when they hoped that it would improve, on the restoration of the temple after the captivity in Babylon. For this was the way, indeed, in which that carnal people understood what was foretold by the prophet Haggai, saying, 'The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former.'¹³⁰ But a little before that he had made it clear that this was said of the new covenant, where he says, in a clear promise of Christ, 'And I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations shall come.'¹³¹ The translators of the Septuagint have given another meaning to this verse: a meaning which applies more readily to the body than to the Head – that is, more readily to the Church than to Christ; for they say, 'The things shall come that are chosen of the Lord from all nations', 'the things' here signifying 'the men', of whom Jesus Himself said in the Gospel, 'Many are called, but few are chosen.'¹³² For it is of such chosen ones of the nations, the 'living stones',¹³³ that a House of God is being built, through the new covenant: a house far more glorious than that temple which was built by King Solomon and restored after the captivity. It was for this reason, therefore – that is, so that they should not suppose that this prophecy of Haggai had been fulfilled in the restoration of the temple – that the Jewish nation had no prophets from that time onwards, and had many calamities inflicted on them by foreign kings and by the Romans themselves.

Not long afterwards, indeed, with the coming of Alexander, the nation was subjugated once more. On this occasion, there was no devastation; for they did not dare to resist, and so, being very easily subdued, they received him in peace. But the glory of the house of

¹³⁰ Haggai 2,9.

¹³¹ Haggai 2,7.

¹³² Matt. 22,14.

¹³³ 1 Pet. 2,5.

Israel was not as great then as it had been under the unfettered power of its own kings. Alexander certainly sacrificed victims in the temple of God;¹³⁴ but this was not because he had been converted to the worship of God in true piety, but because, in his ungodly vanity, he supposed that God was to be worshipped in company with the false gods. Subsequently, after the death of Alexander, Ptolemy, son of Lagus, whom I have already mentioned, sent captives away into Egypt. His successor, Ptolemy Philadelphus, showed great benevolence in allowing them to return; and it is thanks to him, as I related a short while ago, that we have the Septuagint translation of the Scriptures. The Jews were then exhausted in the wars which are described in the books of the Maccabees. Thereafter, they were taken captive by Ptolemy, king of Alexandria, called Epiphanes.¹³⁵ Next, under Antiochus, king of Syria, they were compelled, by means of many and most grievous tortures, to worship idols; and the Temple itself was full of the sacrileges and superstitions of the Gentiles. But Judas, called Maccabeus, the doughtiest captain of the Jews, repulsed the warlords of Antiochus and cleansed the Temple of all the defilement of that idolatry.¹³⁶

Not long afterwards, however, a certain Alcimus became High Priest through his own ambition, even though this was unlawful, because he was not a member of the priestly tribe. There ensued a period of almost fifty years, during which, though they prospered in some ways, the Jews knew no peace; and after this time Aristobulus was the first among the Jews who, on assuming the diadem, became both king and high priest. Before that time, indeed, after the return from the Babylonian captivity and the restoration of the Temple, the Jews had no kings, but captains or leaders instead. To be sure, a king can be called a leader, because he takes the lead in ruling; and he can be called a captain because he commands the army. But it does not follow that anyone who is a leader or a commander can also be called a king; as Aristobulus was.

He was succeeded by Alexander, who also was both king and high priest; and Alexander, it is said, reigned over his people cruelly. After him, his wife Alexandra became queen of the Jews; and from her time onwards still more grievous sufferings pursued

¹³⁴ Cf. Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae*, 11,8,5.

¹³⁵ Cf. Josephus, *Ant. Jud.*, 12,3,3.

¹³⁶ Cf. 2 Macc. 10, 1ff; Josephus, *Ant. Jud.*, 12,7,1ff.

them. Indeed, Alexandra's sons, Aristobulus and Hyrcanus, striving with one another for the kingdom, appealed to the forces of Rome against the Israelite people; for Hyrcanus sought Roman help against his brother. By that time, Rome had already subjugated Africa and Greece and commanded a broad empire in other parts of the world also; yet it seemed as if she was not strong enough to support her own weight, and had, as it were, broken herself by her own greatness. She had, in fact, reached the point of grave domestic seditions. She had proceeded to the Social War and, shortly afterwards, to the Civil Wars; and these things had so diminished and exhausted her that the transformation of her commonwealth into a monarchical government was now imminent. This was the state of affairs, then, when Pompey, a most outstanding leader of the Roman people, entered Judea with his army and took the city. He opened the doors of the Temple not with the devotion of a suppliant but by the right of a victor, and went into the Holy of Holies, which only the High Priest was allowed to enter, not as a worshipper, but as a profaner. After confirming Hyrcanus in the high priesthood, and imposing Antipater on the subjugated people as their custodian (as procurators were then called), he carried off Aristobulus as a prisoner. Henceforward the Jews also were tributaries of the Romans. Subsequently, Cassius¹³⁷ even looted the Temple. Then, after a few more years, and as they deserved, the Jews received a foreigner, Herod, as their king; and it was in his reign that Christ was born. For now had come the fullness of time signified by the prophetic spirit through the mouth of the patriarch Jacob, when he said, 'The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until He shall come for Whom it is reserved; and He shall be the expectation of the Gentiles.'¹³⁸ And indeed there did not fail to be a Jewish prince of the Jews down to the time of this Herod, whom they received as their first king of foreign birth. This, therefore, was now the time when He should come, for Whom was reserved that which was promised under the new covenant, so that He should be the expectation of the Gentiles. However, it would not be possible for the Gentiles to expect Him to come and do judgment in the splendour of His power, as we now see that

¹³⁷ In fact it was Crassus.

¹³⁸ Gen. 49,10.

they do, had they not first believed in Him when He came to suffer judgment in the humility of His patience.

46 Of the birth of our Saviour, in Whom the Word was made flesh;¹³⁹ and of the scattering of the Jews among all the nations, as had been prophesied

When Herod reigned in Judea, and when, the condition of the commonwealth having now changed, Caesar Augustus had become emperor, and had brought peace to the whole world, Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judah, in accordance with the prophecy given long before.¹⁴⁰ He was first revealed to us as a man, born of a human virgin, and His godhood, from God the Father, was concealed; for this is what the prophet foretold: 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive in the womb, and bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us.'¹⁴¹ Then, in order to show us that He is indeed God, He performed many miracles, of which the Gospel Scriptures contain as many as seemed enough to proclaim Him. The first of these is the great miracle of his birth; the last, his ascension into heaven with a body raised again from the dead. But the Jews who slew Him and would not believe in Him, who would not believe that it behoved Him to die and rise again, suffered a more unhappy destruction at the hands of the Romans and were utterly rooted out from their kingdom, where they had already been under the dominion of foreigners. They were scattered throughout the whole world (for there is certainly nowhere in the world where they are not present); and so, by their own Scriptures, they bear witness for us that we have not invented the prophecies concerning Christ. Indeed, many of the Jews, reflecting upon those prophecies both before His passion and, especially, after His resurrection, have themselves believed in Him; and it is of these Jews that it was foretold, 'For though Thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return.'¹⁴² The rest of them, however, were made blind; and of them it was foretold, 'Let

¹³⁹ John 1,14.

¹⁴⁰ Mic. 5,2.

¹⁴¹ Is. 7,14.

¹⁴² Is. 10,20.

their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake.¹⁴³ Thus, when the Jews do not believe in our Scriptures, their own Scriptures are fulfilled in them, while they read them with darkened eyes. It may be, of course, that someone will say that the Christians have invented the prophecies of Christ which are published under the name of the Sibyl, or any prophecies, if there are such, which are attributed to others, and do not arise within the Jewish people. To us, however, those prophecies which are produced from the books of our adversaries themselves are enough; for we recognise that it is for the sake of such testimony, with which, even against their will, they furnish us by having and preserving those books, that they themselves are scattered throughout all the nations, wherever the Christian Church spreads.

Indeed, a prophecy concerning this scattering was given long ago in the Book of Psalms, which they also read, where it is written: 'My God, His mercy shall go before me. My God hath shown me concerning mine enemies, that Thou shalt not slay them, lest they should at last forget Thy Law: disperse them in Thy might.'¹⁴⁴ God has therefore shown to the Church the grace of His mercy in her enemies the Jews; for, as the apostle says, 'their offence is the salvation of the Gentiles'.¹⁴⁵ And this is why He did not slay them – why, that is, even though they have been conquered and oppressed by the Romans, the Jews have not entirely perished: lest they should forget the Law of God and so fail to bear witness of the kind of which we are here speaking. Thus it was not enough for the psalmist to say, 'Thou shalt not slay them, lest they should at last forget Thy Law', without adding, 'disperse them'. For if that testimony of the Scriptures existed only in the Jews' own land, and not everywhere, then, clearly, the Church, which is everywhere, would not have it to bear witness in all nations to the prophecies which were given long ago concerning Christ.

¹⁴³ Psalm 69,22.

¹⁴⁴ Psalm 59,10f.

¹⁴⁵ Rom. 11,11.

47 Whether there were any members of the fellowship of the Heavenly City outside the race of Israel before the Christian times

By the same token, if it comes, or shall come, to our knowledge that any stranger – that is, anyone not born of the house of Israel nor received by that people into the sacred canon – has written any prophecy concerning Christ, he can be cited by us as an additional testimony. Such testimony is not necessary to us, and we should not miss it if it were lacking; but it is not unacceptable for us to believe that, in other peoples as well as the Jews, there were men to whom this mystery was revealed, and who were inspired to proclaim it. It may be that they shared in the same gracious gift of God; or, if not, perhaps they were taught by the evil angels, who, as we know, confessed Christ in His presence, when the Jews did not acknowledge Him.¹⁴⁶ Nor do I suppose that even the Jews dare to claim that, from the time when the line of Israel began, with the rejection of his elder brother, no one has ever belonged to God except the Israelites. To be sure, there was no other people who might truly be called the people of God; but the Jews nonetheless cannot deny that in other nations also there have been some men who belonged, not by earthly but by heavenly fellowship, to the true Israelites, the citizens of the supernal fatherland. And, if they do deny this, they are very easily proved wrong by the example of that holy and wondrous man Job. For he was neither an Israelite by birth nor a proselyte: that is, a convert to the people of Israel. He traced his descent from the race of Edom; he was born there, and he died there. Yet so highly is he praised in the divine eloquence that no man of his time is his equal in righteousness and piety. And although we do not find his dates in the *Chronicon*, we gather from his book, which the Israelites received into their authoritative canon on its own merits, that he belonged to the third generation after Israel. I do not doubt that it was by the dispensation of divine providence that from this one man we should know that there could also be men of other nations who lived according to God and were pleasing to Him, as belonging to the spiritual Jerusalem. It is not to be believed, however, that this was granted to anyone

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Matt. 8,29; Mark 1,24; Luke 4,34.

unless he had received a divine revelation of 'the one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus',¹⁴⁷ Whose future coming in the flesh was foretold to the saints of old, just as He has now been announced to us as having come, so that, through Him, one and the same faith may lead to God all who are predestined for the City of God, which is God's house and God's temple.

But all prophecies produced from sources other than scriptural ones to show the grace of God through Jesus Christ may be suspected of being Christian fabrications. This is why there is no surer way of refuting the outsiders who contend with us on this matter, and of making them ours if they are men of right understanding, than to set forth the divine predictions of Christ which are written in the Jewish Scriptures. Thus, thanks to the expulsion of the Jews from their own home, and their dispersal throughout the world for the sake of this testimony, the Church of Christ has increased throughout the whole world.

48 That the prophecy of Haggai, in which he said that the glory of the latter house of God would be greater than that of the former, was truly fulfilled not in the restoration of the temple, but in the Church of Christ

This house of God is greater in glory than was that former one, built of wood and stone and other precious materials and metals. Thus the prophecy of Haggai¹⁴⁸ was not fulfilled in the restoration of that former temple. For after it was restored, it cannot be shown to have had at any time a glory as great as that which it had had in the time of Solomon. On the contrary, the diminished glory of that house is shown first in the cessation of prophecy, and then by the great calamities which befell the nation itself, down to its final destruction, which was accomplished at the hands of the Romans, as the events described above¹⁴⁹ attest. But this house of ours, which belongs to the new covenant, certainly is greater in glory, in that its 'living stones'¹⁵⁰ are more precious; for it is constructed of those

¹⁴⁷ 1 Tim. 2,5.

¹⁴⁸ Haggai 2,7.

¹⁴⁹ Ch. 45.

¹⁵⁰ 1 Pet. 2,5.

men who believe, and who have themselves been created anew. Yet this new house was prefigured in the restoration of that temple; for the restoration of that building itself signifies, as by a prophetic utterance, the second covenant, which is called new. Therefore, when God said, through the prophet named above, 'And I will give peace in this place',¹⁵¹ the word 'place' is a symbol, and by it we are to understand that which it symbolises. And so the rebuilding 'in this place' stands for the Church which was to be built by Christ. And when it is said, 'I will give peace in this place', this is to be taken as meaning nothing other than, 'I shall give peace in the place which the words 'this place' symbolise.' For all things with a symbolic meaning are seen as in some way acting the part of those things which they symbolise. For instance, the apostle says, 'That Rock was Christ',¹⁵² because the rock of which he spoke certainly symbolised Christ. Thus, the glory of this house, the new covenant, is greater than the glory of the former house, the old covenant, and it will appear even greater when it is dedicated. For then 'shall come the desired of all nations',¹⁵³ as the Hebrew reads. Now His first coming was not yet desired of all nations. For they did not know of Him Whom they ought to desire, in Whom they had not yet believed. Then too, according to the seventy translators (and their rendering has a prophetic sense also) 'shall come those who are elected of the Lord out of all nations'. For then, in truth, none but the elect will come, of whom the apostle says, 'According as he hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world.'¹⁵⁴ For the Master Builder Who said, 'Many are called, but few are chosen',¹⁵⁵ did not say this of those who, being called, came in such a way as to be cast out from the feast;¹⁵⁶ rather, He intended to show us a house built up of the elect, which henceforth shall fear no ruin. Yet because the Churches are also full of those who will be separated by winnowing, as on the threshing-floor, the glory of this house does not yet appear as fully as it will in time to come, when everyone who is there will be there forever.

¹⁵¹ Haggai 2,9.

¹⁵² 1 Cor. 10,4.

¹⁵³ Haggai 2,7.

¹⁵⁴ Eph. 1,4.

¹⁵⁵ Matt. 22,14.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Matt. 22,11ff.

49 Of the unrestricted increase of the Church,
wherein many of the reprobate are, in this world,
mingled with the elect

In this wicked world, and in these evil days, the Church is preparing through her present humiliation for her future exaltation. She is being tested by the stings of fear, the torments of sorrow, the hardships of toil, and the perils of temptation; and she rejoices only in hope, when her joy is wholesome. At this time, therefore, many reprobate are mingled in the Church with the good. Both are as it were collected in the net of the Gospel; and in this world, as in a sea, both swim together without separation, enclosed in the net until brought ashore.¹⁵⁷ Then, however, the wicked will be separated from the good, so that among the good, as in His temple, 'God may be all in all.'¹⁵⁸ We acknowledge, indeed, that His word is now fulfilled, Who spoke in the psalm and said, 'I have announced and spoken; they are multiplied above number.'¹⁵⁹ This has been coming to pass ever since Christ spoke through the mouth of John, his forerunner, and then by His own mouth, and said, 'Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'¹⁶⁰

Christ chose as His disciples, whom He also called apostles, men of humble birth, undistinguished and illiterate, so that, if there was any greatness in them and in what they did, this would be due to Christ Himself, present and acting in them. He had one among them whom, though evil, He used for good, both to fulfil the destiny of His passion and to present to His Church an example of forbearance towards the wicked. Having spread the holy Gospel insofar as it behoved Him to do so through His bodily presence, He suffered, died, and rose again, showing by His passion what we ought to undergo for the sake of truth, and by His resurrection what we ought to hope for in eternity, to say nothing of the profound mystery whereby His blood was shed for the remission of sins. Then, He dwelt on earth with His disciples for forty days, and in their sight ascended into heaven. Thereafter, when ten days had passed, He sent the Holy Spirit, as He had promised; and the great-

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Matt. 13,47ff.

¹⁵⁸ 1 Cor. 15,28.

¹⁵⁹ Psalm 40,5.

¹⁶⁰ Matt. 3,2; 4,17.

est and most striking sign of the Spirit's coming to those who believed was that each one of them spoke in the tongues of all nations. In this way, it was shown that the unity of the Catholic Church would be fulfilled in all the nations, and that she would therefore speak in all tongues.

50 Of the preaching of the Gospel, which is made
more famous and mighty by the sufferings of those
who proclaim it

Then was fulfilled the prophecy: 'Out of Sion shall go forth the Law, and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem';¹⁶¹ and so too what the Lord Christ Himself foretold, when, after His resurrection, His disciples were astonished and 'He opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.'¹⁶² Again, when they questioned Him concerning His final coming, He answered and said, 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power; but ye shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even unto the ends of the earth.'¹⁶³

The Church first spread forth from Jerusalem, and when many in Judea and Samaria had believed, other nations were reached also, as the Gospel was proclaimed by those whom Christ Himself had prepared like lamps; for He had trimmed them with His word and kindled them with the Holy Spirit. For Christ had said to them, 'Fear ye not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.'¹⁶⁴ And, that they might not be frozen with fear, they burned with the ardour of charity. Finally, the Gospel was preached throughout the whole world, not only by those who had seen and heard Christ both before His passion and after His resurrection, but

¹⁶¹ Is. 2,3.

¹⁶² Luke 24,45ff.

¹⁶³ Acts 1,7f.

¹⁶⁴ Matt. 10,28.

also, after their death, by their successors, in the midst of terrible persecutions and many tortures and the deaths of the martyrs. And God bore witness by signs and manifestations and divers acts of power, and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, so that the peoples of the Gentiles, believing in Him Who was crucified for their redemption, might venerate with Christian love the blood of the martyrs which they had shed in their devilish fury; and so that the very kings by whose laws the Church was being laid waste might for their salvation become subject to that Name which they had cruelly endeavoured to remove from the earth, and might begin to persecute the false gods, for whose sake the worshippers of the true God had hitherto been persecuted.

51 That the Catholic faith may indeed be strengthened by the dissensions of heretics

But the devil, seeing the temples of the demons deserted and the human race rushing to embrace the name of the Mediator Who redeems us, stirred up heretics who, though calling themselves Christians, opposed the teaching of Christ: as if these could be contained indiscriminately in the City of God without correction, just as the city of confusion indifferently contained philosophers who held diverse and contradictory opinions. There are those in the Church of Christ, therefore, who have a taste for some morbid and depraved doctrine, and who, when corrected, so that they may acquire a taste for what is wholesome and right, obstinately resist and refuse to amend their pestiferous and deadly dogmas, but persist in defending them. These become heretics and, when they depart from the Church, they are counted among the enemies who trouble her. Even these, however, by their very wickedness, bring advantage to the true, catholic members of Christ; for God makes good use even of the wicked, and ensures that 'all things work together for good to them that love God'.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, all the enemies of the Church, however blinded by error or depraved by malice, train the Church in patience if they are given the power of inflicting bodily harm; whereas, if they oppose her only by their wicked beliefs, they train her in wisdom. Moreover, they train her in benev-

¹⁶⁵ Rom. 8,28.

olence, or even beneficence, so that she may show love even to her enemies by persuading them either through teaching or by stern discipline. Thus, even the devil, the prince of that ungodly city, when he stirs up his own vessels against the City of God on pilgrimage in this world, is not permitted to do it any injury. Beyond doubt, God's providence procures for that City both the consolation of material prosperity, so that she is not broken by adversity, and the discipline of adversity so that she is not corrupted by prosperity. And He tempers the one with the other in such a way that we here recognise the source of that saying in the psalm, 'According to the multitude of my griefs in my heart, Thy consolations have delighted my soul.'¹⁶⁶ Hence also the words of the apostle: 'Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation'.¹⁶⁷

For we must not suppose that the following saying of the same teacher can at any time fail to be true: 'Whoever will live piously in Christ shall suffer persecution.'¹⁶⁸ For when those outside the Church do not rage, and there seems to be, and indeed is, a tranquillity which brings great consolation, especially to the weak, there is even then no lack within the Church of those who by their abandoned morals torture the hearts of those who live piously. Indeed, there are many such, who blaspheme the name of 'Christian' and 'Catholic'. And the dearer this name is to those who 'will live piously in Christ', the more deeply are they grieved when evildoers within cause it to be less beloved than the minds of the pious desire. Moreover, when the heretics themselves are thought to possess the Christian name and the sacraments, the Scriptures, and the creed, this brings great pain to the hearts of the pious. This is because many who wish to become Christians are compelled to hesitate because of the dissensions of the heretics. It is also because many defamers find occasion in such dissensions for blaspheming the name of Christian, since even the heretics are called, in a manner of speaking, Christians. Thanks to these and other such depraved doings and errors of men, those who 'will live piously in Christ' suffer persecution even when no one molests or tortures them in body. For they suffer this persecution not in their bodies but in

¹⁶⁶ Psalm 94, 19.

¹⁶⁷ Rom. 12, 12.

¹⁶⁸ 2 Tim. 3, 12.

their hearts. Hence the psalmist says, 'According to the multitude of my griefs in my heart'; he does not say, 'in my body'.

Again, because the divine promises are thought of as immutable, and because the apostle says, 'The Lord knoweth them that are His; for whom He did foreknow, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son',¹⁶⁹ it follows that none of the elect can perish. This is why the psalm continues, 'Thy consolations have delighted my soul.' For the pain that arises in the hearts of the pious when they are persecuted by the doings of bad or false Christians brings profit to those who suffer it. This is so because such pain proceeds from a charity whereby they do not wish these persecutors either to perish or to impede the salvation of others. Above all, great consolations come when those who err are corrected; for those consolations flood the souls of the pious with a joy as great as were the pains that tormented them at the thought that those who erred might be lost. In this fashion the Church proceeds on her pilgrimage in this world, in these evil days: a pilgrimage which began not simply in the time of the corporeal presence of Christ and His apostles, but with Abel himself, the first righteous man, slain by his ungodly brother; and which extends from that time even to the end of this world, amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God.

52 Whether we should believe, as some do, that, after the ten persecutions which have already occurred, there is only one more, an eleventh, to come, which is to take place in the time of Antichrist

Accordingly, we should not, I think, venture to say or believe that the Church will suffer no further persecutions beyond the number she has already undergone – namely, ten – until the time of Antichrist: that the eleventh and last persecution will come from Antichrist. We have seen, and still see, that not a few people hold this belief.¹⁷⁰ The first persecution they reckon to be that inflicted by Nero; the second, that of Domitian; the third, that of Trajan; the fourth, that of Antoninus; the fifth, that of Severus; the sixth,

¹⁶⁹ Rom. 8,29.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Orosius, 7,17.

that of Maximinus; the seventh, that of Decius; the eighth, that of Valerian; the ninth, that of Aurelian; and the tenth that of Diocletian and Maximian. They consider that, because there were ten plagues of Egypt before the people of God began their exodus thence, this should be understood as a sign that the final persecution, of Antichrist, corresponds to the eleventh plague, by which the Egyptians, as they angrily pursued the Hebrews, perished in the Red Sea while the people of God passed over onto dry land. I do not, however, consider that those events in Egypt were prophetic signs of these persecutions. Those who think otherwise have seemingly compared the details of each case with refinement and ingenuity; but they have done this not by the spirit of prophecy, but by the conjecture of the human mind, which sometimes achieves the truth, but sometimes fails to do so.

For what account will those who believe this give of the persecution by which the Lord Himself was crucified? Where is this to be placed in their calculation? But perhaps they consider that this persecution is to be left out of the reckoning. Perhaps they believe that the only instances to be counted are those which pertain to the body, and that the one in which the Head was seized and slain is therefore to be excluded. In this case, however, what will they make of the persecution which occurred in Jerusalem after Christ had ascended into heaven? On this occasion, the blessed Stephen was stoned, James the brother of John was slain with the sword, and the apostle Peter was imprisoned to be put to death, and was rescued by an angel. Then, too, the brethren were put to flight and dispersed from Jerusalem, and Saul (who afterwards became the apostle Paul) was laying waste the Church. Also, when Paul himself, now a believer, proclaimed the Gospel which once he had persecuted, he suffered the same treatment as he had inflicted. This occurred wherever, with his great fervour, he preached the Gospel, both in Judea and among the Gentiles. Why, therefore, do they choose to begin with Nero, seeing that, during the time of her growth down to the time of Nero, the Church had already suffered the most atrocious persecutions, which it would take too long to describe in full? If, moreover, they consider that only persecutions inflicted by kings should be counted, it was a king, Herod, who inflicted the most grievous persecution even after the ascension of the Lord.

Again, what answer will they make concerning Julian, whom they do not include in the ten? Did he not persecute the Church when he forbade Christians either to give or to receive a liberal education? Under him the elder Valentinian, who was the third emperor after him, showed himself to be a confessor of the Christian faith, and was deprived of his military command. I shall say nothing of what Julian began to do at Antioch, and would have accomplished there had it not been for the outstanding faith and constancy of one young man. Many people had been seized and were to be tortured, and this young person, the first to be taken, was tortured all day long; yet still, even in the midst of the most awful torments, he sang hymns of praise. The emperor was stricken with wonder at such freedom and joy, and he feared to harm the other victims lest he should be shamed even more completely. Finally, within our own memory, did not Valens, the Arian, the brother of the Valentinian just mentioned, devastate the Catholic Church in the East in a great persecution? How strange it is not to consider that the Church, as she bears fruit and increases throughout the whole world, can suffer persecution from kings among some nations, even when she does not suffer the same among others! Was it not to be counted as a persecution when, in the kingdom of the Goths itself, the king of the Goths persecuted the Christians with amazing cruelty because there were none there save Catholics?¹⁷¹ Many of these were crowned with martyrdom, as we have heard from certain of the brethren, who were boys there at the time, and who vividly recalled what they had seen. And what of the recent events in Persia? Did not persecution so boil up against the Christians there – if, indeed, it has yet subsided – that many fugitives from Persia fled even to Roman towns?¹⁷² When I think of these and similar events, it seems to me that no limit can be set to the number of persecutions which the Church must endure for her training. But, then again, it is no less rash to assert that there are to be other persecutions by kings, apart from that final persecution concerning which no Christian has any doubt. Thus, I leave the question undecided, offering no support or opposition to either side, but merely calling upon both sides to abstain from the presumption of making any assertion on the matter.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Orosius, 6,32.

¹⁷² Cf. Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.*, 5,38.

53 Of the hidden time of the final persecution

Truly, however, that final persecution, which is to be the work of Antichrist, will be extinguished by Jesus himself, present in person. For it is written that 'He shall slay him with the breath of His mouth, and empty him with the brightness of His presence.'¹⁷³ It is usual to ask at this point, 'When will this happen?' But this question is entirely inappropriate. For had it been of profit to us to know the answer to it, who better to tell us than the Master, God himself, when the disciples asked Him? For they were not silent on this matter when they were with Him; on the contrary, they asked Him directly, saying, 'Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' But He said, 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power.'¹⁷⁴ Now in fact they had not questioned Him concerning the hour or the day or the year, but the time, when they received this answer. In vain, therefore, do we strive to compute and define the number of years that remain for this world, since we hear from the mouth of the Truth Himself that it is not for us to know this. Yet some have said that there may be as many as four hundred, five hundred, or even a thousand years to be completed between the Lord's ascension and His final coming. It would, however, take too long to demonstrate how each of these people supports his opinion. Nor is it necessary to do so; for they make use of human conjectures, and offer no firm evidence from the authority of canonical Scripture. Truly, Christ commands all who make such calculations on this subject to relax their fingers and let them rest,¹⁷⁵ when He says, 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power.'

But since this sentence appears in the Gospel, it is no wonder that the worshippers of the many false gods have not been restrained by it from their pretence: from the pretence that the length of time for which the Christian religion is to endure has been determined by the decisions of the demons whom they worship as gods. For when those worshippers saw that Christianity could not be destroyed even by so many and such great persecutions, but, on the

¹⁷³ 2 Thess. 2,8.

¹⁷⁴ Acts 1,6f.

¹⁷⁵ That is, to stop counting on their fingers!

contrary, had increased wondrously because of them, they devised I know not what Greek verses, presenting them as if poured forth from a divine oracle to someone consulting it. In them they do indeed make Christ innocent of what they represent as a sacrilegious crime; but they then proceed to say that Peter made use of sorcery to ensure that the name of Christ should be worshipped for 365 years, and that on the completion of that number of years it should straightway come to an end.

O, the hearts of learned men! What cultivated intellects, not choosing to believe in Christ, but thinking it proper to believe such things of Christ! – to believe that Peter, His disciple, did not learn magical arts from Him, yet that, though Christ was innocent, Peter was a magician, and preferred that, through his magical arts, Christ's name should be worshipped rather than his own, at the cost of great labour and peril to himself and, at last, even at the cost of pouring out his own blood! If Peter the magician caused the world so to love Christ, what had the innocent Christ done to cause Peter so to love Him? Let our adversaries answer this for themselves. Then, if they can, let them understand that it was by supernatural grace that the world was brought to love Christ for the sake of eternal life; and that it was by that same grace that Peter loved Christ for the sake of receiving eternal life from Him, even to the extent of suffering temporal death for Him.

Then again, what kind of gods are they who can predict such a thing without being able to avert it; who succumbed to a single magician, and to a single piece of vile magic (they say that a little boy, one year old, was slain, torn to pieces, and buried with nefarious rites) so completely that they allowed a sect opposed to them to wax great for so long a time: to rise above the horrifying cruelties of so many great persecutions, not by resisting them but by patient endurance, and even to cast down their own images, temples, rites and oracles? Finally, who was the god – for it was certainly not ours, but one of their own – who was either persuaded or forced by so vile a deed to do such a thing? For, as those verses tell us, it was not by using his magic art on some demon, but on a god, that Peter made this arrangement. Such is the kind of god which those have who do not have Christ!

54 Of the most foolish pagan falsehood that purports
to limit the duration of the Christian religion to 365
years

I might have gathered many other arguments of this kind, were it not for the fact that the year foretold by a false divination and believed in by a deluded vanity has already gone by. Indeed, counting from the time when the worship of Christ was instituted by His presence in the flesh and by his apostles, the 365 years were completed some time ago. Why, then, should we seek any other proof to refute this falsehood? We need not take the time of Christ's nativity as the start of this period, because He had no disciples in his infancy and boyhood; but, from the time when He began to have disciples, there is no doubt that the Christian doctrine and religion began to be known through His corporeal presence: that is, after He was baptised in the river Jordan by the ministry of John. This, indeed, is why it was prophesied of Him long ago, 'He shall reign from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.'¹⁷⁶ Before Christ suffered and rose again, however, the Christian faith had not yet taken on its definitive form for all believers. It was defined in this form by Christ's resurrection; which is why the apostle Paul speaks to the men of Athens as follows, saying, 'But now He commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man in Whom He hath defined the faith to all men, raising Him from the dead.'¹⁷⁷ Thus, it is better for us, in seeking an answer to this question, to begin from the resurrection: especially since this was also the time – after the resurrection of Christ – when the Holy Spirit was to be given, in that City from which the second Law, that is, the new covenant, was to issue. For the first Law, called the old covenant, came from Mount Sinai through Moses; whereas it was foretold of this second Law, which was to be given through Christ, that 'Out of Sion shall go forth the Law, and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem.'¹⁷⁸ That is why Christ Himself said that repentance should be preached in

¹⁷⁶ Psalm 72,8.

¹⁷⁷ Acts 17,30f.

¹⁷⁸ Is. 2,3.

His name among all nations, but beginning at Jerusalem.¹⁷⁹ It was at Jerusalem, therefore, that the worship of this Name began, so that men should believe in Jesus Christ, Who was crucified and rose again. It was there that this faith burst into flame; and it did so with such distinguished beginnings that some thousands of men were converted to the name of Christ with wondrous alacrity. They sold their goods to distribute to the poor; in this way, by a holy resolve and a most ardent charity, they embraced a willing poverty; and they prepared themselves, in the midst of the Jews, who raged and thirsted for their blood, to do battle for the truth even unto death – not by force of arms, but by the mightier power of endurance. If so much was accomplished without any magical arts, why do our adversaries hesitate to believe that the same result could have been achieved throughout the whole world by the same divine power that effected it here?

Let us, however, suppose that Peter did indeed perform a feat of magic, as a result of which a great multitude of men at Jerusalem were fired to worship Christ's name: men who had seized Him and nailed Him to the cross, or mocked Him when He was nailed to it. In this case, then, it is from the year of this act of sorcery that we must begin when we seek to discover when the 365 years came to an end. So: Christ died during the consulship of the two Gemini,¹⁸⁰ on the eighth day before the Kalends of April. He rose again on the third day, as the apostles proved by the evidence of their own senses. Then, after forty days, he ascended into heaven; and ten days later (that is, on the fiftieth day after his resurrection) he sent the Holy Spirit. It was then that three thousand people believed when the apostles proclaimed Him. It was then, therefore, that the worship of that Name arose: through the efficacy of the Holy Spirit, as we believe and as the truth holds; but, according to the tale invented or believed by impious vanity, through Peter's magic arts. Again, a little later, five thousand men believed when a wondrous sign was performed through the words of this same Peter: when a beggar, so lame from his mother's womb that he was carried by others to the door of the temple to beg for alms there, was healed in the name of Jesus Christ and leaped up. And the Church increased thereafter, as more and more came to believe.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Luke 24,27.

¹⁸⁰ I.e. in the year 29.

Thus we can establish the very day from which that year began: namely, the day when the Holy Spirit was sent, on the Ides of May. If we count the consuls from this date, then, the 365 years are found to be completed on the same Ides in the consulship of Honorius and Eutychianus.¹⁸¹ According to that oracle of demons or fiction of men, therefore, the Christian religion should have ceased to exist in the next year, when Mallius Theodorus was consul. Yet we know what happened in that year, on the fourteenth day before the Kalends of April, in Carthage, that far-famed and most eminent city of Africa (there is no need to enquire into what may have occurred in other parts of the world): Gaudentius and Jovius, officers of the emperor Honorius, destroyed the temples of the false gods and smashed their images! And who does not see how greatly the worship of Christ's name has increased during the thirty years or so which have elapsed from that time down to the present day?¹⁸² – especially after so many became Christians who had formerly been held back from the faith because they thought that divination true, and who then, after the completion of the specified number of years, saw it to be empty and laughable. We, therefore, who are, and who are called, Christians, do not believe in Peter, but in Him in Whom Peter believed. We are strengthened by Peter's preaching of Christ; we are not poisoned by Peter's incantations. We are not deceived by his magic; rather, we are assisted by his good deeds. The Christ Who was Peter's Master in the teaching that leads to eternal life is Himself our Master also.

Now, however, let us bring this book to a conclusion. Thus far, we have depicted, to the extent that seemed sufficient, the mortal course of the two cities, the Heavenly and the earthly, which are mingled together from the beginning to the end. One of them, the earthly, has made for itself such false gods as it wished, from whatever source it chose – even creating them out of men – in order to serve them with sacrifices. But the other, the Heavenly, a pilgrim in this world, does not make false gods. Rather, that City is itself made by the true God, and is itself to be His true sacrifice. Both cities alike make use of the good things, or are afflicted with the

¹⁸¹ I.e. in the year 398; the reader will notice Augustine's trivial mistake: 29+365=394, not 398.

¹⁸² I.e. from 394 to ca. 426 (the year in which *De civitate Dei* was finished).

evils, of this temporal state; but they do so with a different faith, a different hope, a different love, until they are separated by the final judgment, and each receives its own end, to which there is no end. And those different ends must be the next topic of our discussion.

Book XIX

I That, according to Varro, the various opinions concerning the Supreme Good might give rise to 288 different philosophical sects

I see that I must next discuss the proper ends of these two cities, the earthly and the Heavenly. First, then, let me expound, as fully as the plan of this work permits, the arguments advanced by mortals in their efforts to create happiness for themselves in the midst of the unhappiness of this life. I shall do this in order to make clear the difference between their vain beliefs and the hope which God gives us: a hope which will be fulfilled in the true blessedness which He will bestow upon us. And I shall do it not only by calling upon divine authority, but also, for the sake of unbelievers, by making as much use of reason as possible.

Now the philosophers have devised a great multitude of different arguments concerning the supreme ends of good and evil. They have devoted the greatest possible attention to this question in the attempt to discover what makes a man happy. For our Final Good is that for the sake of which other things are to be desired, while it is itself to be desired for its own sake; and the Final Evil is that for which other things are to be avoided, while it is itself to be avoided on its own account.¹ Thus, when we here speak of the 'final' good, we do not mean a 'last' good in the sense that, after it, good is now finished so that it does not exist; rather, we mean the 'end' whereby it is perfected and fulfilled. Again, by the 'final' evil we do not mean the finish of evil whereby it ceases to be, but the final end to which its harmful effects lead us. These two ends, then, are the Supreme Good and the Supreme Evil. And, as I have said, the quest for these, and the desire for the attainment of the Supreme Good in this life and the avoidance of the Supreme Evil, has been the object of the labours of those who have made the pursuit of wisdom their profession in the midst of the vanity of this world. And, though they have erred in many different ways, nature itself has not permitted them to wander too far from the path of truth; so that there were none who did not place the Supreme Good and the Supreme

¹ Cf. Aristotle, *Nic. Eth.*, 1,2.

Evil in one of three locations: in the soul, in the body, or in both. Beginning from this division of the sects of philosophy into three classes, as it were, Marcus Varro, in his book *De philosophia*,² has by diligent and subtle study identified a range of teachings so broad that, by employing certain principles of differentiation, he has found it easy to distinguish 288 sects in all: not ones already in existence, that is, but sects which could possibly exist.

To show this briefly, I must begin with the statement which Varro himself made in the book just named. He says that there are four objects which men desire by nature, without a teacher, without the help of any teaching, without effort, and without acquiring the art of living which we call 'virtue' and which, beyond doubt, is learned.³ These are: pleasure, which is an agreeable motion of the body's senses; rest, the state in which one suffers no bodily distress; a combination of these two (to which Epicurus gives the name pleasure, as if they were one); and, generally, the primary objects of nature.⁴ These last include the things already mentioned and others also, such as the integrity and health and safety of the body, or the mental capacities, small or great, which are found in the souls of men. Now these four things – pleasure, rest, a combination of these, and the primary objects of nature – exist in us in such a way that we must either desire virtue (which is to be implanted in us later, by teaching) for the sake of them, or we must desire them for the sake of virtue, or we must desire both them and virtue simply for their own sakes. Thus, twelve sects are produced, since each of the four desiderata can be desired in three ways. I shall demonstrate this in one instance, and then it will not be difficult to see how the same thing is true of the rest. Since, therefore, bodily pleasure may be subordinated to virtue of mind, or preferred to it, or valued equally with it, this produces a threefold division of sects. Now bodily pleasure is subordinated to virtue when it is brought into the service of virtue. For example, it belongs to the office of virtue to live for one's country and to produce sons for the sake of one's country; and neither of these things can be done without bodily pleasure. For it is not possible to take food

² A work which has not survived.

³ Cf. e.g. Plato, *Meno*, 86ff; Aristotle, *Nic. Eth.*, 2, 1.

⁴ Cf. Cicero, *De fin.*, 2, 4.

and drink, in order to live, or to have sexual intercourse, in order to produce sons, without also experiencing pleasure. When, on the other hand, bodily pleasure is preferred to virtue, it is desired for its own sake, and it is believed that virtue should be brought into its service: it is believed, that is, that the purpose of virtue is nothing more than the achievement or maintenance of bodily pleasure. Now this is certainly a disordered kind of life, when virtue is a slave with pleasure as its mistress: indeed, it is not then really to be called virtue at all. But this dreadful wickedness nonetheless has some philosophers as its patrons and defenders. Again, pleasure is valued equally with virtue when neither is desired for the sake of the other, but both for their own sake. Hence, pleasure produces three sects, in that it may be subordinated to virtue, preferred to it, or valued equally with it. So too in the case of rest, the combination of rest and pleasure, and the primary objects of nature: each of these will be found to give rise to three sects. Thanks to the variety of human opinion, each of these things is sometimes subordinated to virtue, sometimes preferred to it, and sometimes valued equally with it; and so we arrive at a total of twelve sects. But this number is itself doubled by the application of a further principle of differentiation: namely, social life. For whoever subscribes to any of these twelve sects does so either for his own sake or for the sake of his fellow man also, for whom he is obliged to wish the same as he wishes for himself. Thus, there are twelve sects of those who consider that this or that view should be held simply for the sake of oneself; and there are twelve others of those who hold that they should embrace this philosophy or that, not merely for their own sake, but for that of others also, whose good they desire as if it were their own. These twenty-four sects are doubled again, to make forty-eight, when yet another principle of differentiation is added, from the New Academy. For, on the one hand, anyone can hold and defend the views of any of those twenty-four sects as being certain, as the Stoics did when they defended the view that the good of man, in which his happiness lies, consists simply in the virtue of his soul. But, on the other, someone else may hold such views, but as uncertain, as the New Academics did when they defended views which seemed to them to be not certain, but nonetheless probable.

Thus, there are twenty-four sects made up of those who hold that their views are to be adopted as certain, by reason of their truth, and another twenty-four made up of those who hold that the same views, though uncertain, should still be held by reason of their probability. Again, one exponent of any of these forty-eight sects may adopt a mode of life like that of other philosophers, whereas another may adopt the mode of life of the Cynics; and this is a principle of differentiation which doubles the total again, making ninety-six. Moreover, each of these sects can be upheld and embraced either by men who love a life of leisure, like those who neither would nor could devote their time to anything but the study of its doctrines; or by those who love an active life, like those who, though philosophers, nonetheless devote themselves to the administration of the State and the government of human affairs; or by those who combine both ways of life, like those who have devoted their time partly to learned leisure and partly to pressing business. Because of these differences, the number of sects may again be trebled, to reach a total of 288.

I have set forth these opinions from Varro's book as briefly and as lucidly as I can, explaining his statements in my own words. He refutes all these sects and chooses one, namely, the Old Academy, founded by Plato and remaining down to the time of Polemo, who was the fourth head, after Plato, of the school called the Academy. This school, Varro wishes to say, held its doctrines as certain; and by this fact he distinguishes it from the New Academy, which holds that all things are uncertain, and which began with Arcesilaus, the successor of Polemo. Varro considers that this sect – the Old Academy, that is – was as free from error as from doubt. It would take too long to discuss all these things fully; but Varro's arguments must not be completely omitted.

First, then, he removes all the principles of differentiation which have multiplied the number of sects. And the reason why he holds that they should be removed is that they involve no difference as to the Final Good: he does not consider that any sect of philosophy should be so called unless it differs from the others in the view which it holds of the Supreme Good and Evil. For man indeed has no purpose in practising philosophy

apart from the attainment of happiness. But that which makes him happy is none other than the Supreme Good. The only purpose of the practice of philosophy, therefore, is the Supreme Good. Thus, a sect which does not have its own view of the Supreme Good is not to be called a sect of philosophy. When, therefore, it is asked whether a wise man will embrace a social life, and will desire and seek the Supreme Good which makes a man happy for his friend as much as for himself, or whether the wise man does what he does solely for his own happiness, the question here does not concern the Supreme Good. Rather, it concerns the taking or not-taking of a partner to share in this good, and that not for the philosopher's own sake but for the sake of that partner, so that the wise man may rejoice in his companion's good as he would rejoice in his own. Again, if we ask the members of the New Academy, to whom all things are uncertain, whether this uncertainty also holds in respect of the subject-matter of philosophy, or whether, as other philosophers do, we should regard philosophical doctrines as possessing certainty, we are here asking not what should be pursued as the Final Good, but whether we should have any doubts as to the truth of that good which it seems to us ought to be pursued. In other words, to say the same thing more clearly, the question here is this: are we to say that the Final Good which is to be pursued is the true good; or are we to say that it seems true, but may be false? In either case, the object of the pursuit is one and the same good. Then again, when we apply the principle of differentiation derived from the habits and mode of life of the Cynics, the question here does not concern the nature of the Final Good. Rather, it is whether anyone who pursues what seems to him to be the true good – whatever it may be that seems to him truly worthy of pursuit – should adopt those habits and that mode of life. There were, in fact, philosophers who, because they embraced the same habits and mode of life, were called Cynics regardless of the fact that they pursued different objects as Final Goods, some pursuing virtue, others pleasure. Thus, whatever it is that distinguishes the Cynics from other philosophers, this has no bearing on their choice of, and adherence to, the good that is to make them happy. For if it did have

any such bearing, then, clearly, the same habit of life would require the pursuit of the same end and a different habit would preclude it.

2 How Varro, by discounting all the merely incidental differences which do not form separate sects, reaches three definitions of the Supreme Good, of which it is still necessary to select one

Then again, there are the three kinds of life. The first, though not idle, is one of leisure, spent in the contemplation of truth or in the search for it. The second consists in engagement with the business of human affairs. The third is a judicious combination of the other two. But when it is asked which of these is the more worthwhile, here again no controversy arises as to the Final Good. Rather, the question is which of the three makes the attainment or preservation of the Final Good either difficult or easy. For it is when someone reaches the Final Good that he is straightway made happy: he is not made happy by a life of learned leisure merely, or of public affairs, or a life which combines both. Indeed, there can be many people living in any one of these three ways who nonetheless go astray in their search for the Final Good which makes a man happy.

Thus the question of the nature of the Final Good and Evil – the question which makes the difference between one philosophical sect and another – is something quite different from the questions concerning social life, the hesitancy of the Academics, the dress and eating habits of the Cynics or the three kinds of life: the leisured, the active, and the combination of the two. None of these latter questions entails any dispute as to the Final Good and Evil. Accordingly, by applying those four criteria – arising from social life, from the New Academy, from the Cynics, and from the three kinds of life – Marcus Varro first arrived at 288 sects and thought it possible to arrive at others by similar means. Then, however, he set them all aside, because they do not entail any difference as to what is the Supreme Good to be pursued. For this reason, he says, the sects are not separate, and should not be so called. Thus, he reverts to those twelve sects which seek to discover the good for man, whose attainment brings him happiness; and he wishes to show that only one of these possesses the truth, whereas all the rest are in error.

By removing the principle of differentiation furnished by the kinds of life he subtracts two-thirds of the total, leaving a remainder of ninety-six. By removing the principle derived from the Cynics, he reduces that number by half, which makes forty-eight. Again, if we exclude the principle derived from the New Academics, there is again a remainder of one half: that is, of twenty-four. If, similarly, we exclude the principle arising from social life, the remainder is twelve, the number doubled by that principle to make twenty-four.

As to those twelve, however, no reason can be given for saying that they are not sects, since their purpose is indeed none other than the quest for the Final Good and Evil; for to discover the Final Good is at once to discover the Final Evil also, as its contrary. These twelve sects are produced by multiplying by three the four desiderata of pleasure, rest, the two combined, and the primary objects of nature which Varro calls 'primary goods'. For these four are indeed sometimes each subordinated to virtue, so that they are seen to be worthy to be desired not for their own sake, but as means to virtue. Sometimes, however, they are preferred to virtue, so that virtue is then deemed necessary not for its own sake, but only for the sake of attaining or preserving them. And sometimes again they are esteemed equally, so that these four desiderata and virtue also are all believed worthy to be desired for their own sakes. Thus, the number four is multiplied by three, and so we arrive at twelve sects. Varro, however, abolishes three of the four desiderata, namely, pleasure, rest, and the combination of the two. He does this not because he considers them unworthy, but because he includes both pleasure and rest in the 'primary goods'. What need is there, then, to make three separate things out of these: that is, out of pleasure and rest taken as two separate objects of desire, with the combination of the two taken as a third? For the primary objects of nature already include these, and many other things as well. Thus, according to Varro, there are three sects which must be diligently examined before we choose between them; for right reason will not permit more than one sect to be right, whether it is one of these three, or, as we shall see later, one that is to be found somewhere else. Meanwhile we must explain, as briefly and clearly as we can, how Varro chooses one of these three: that is, one of the three sects which hold either that the primary objects of nature are to be sought for the sake of virtue; that virtue is to be sought for their sake; or that both

virtue and the primary objects of nature are to be sought for their own sake.

3 Which of the main opinions as to the Supreme Good is to be preferred, according to Varro, who follows Antiochus and the Old Academy

Varro, then, endeavours to establish which of these three sects is the true one, and therefore the one to be adopted, in the following way. First, since the Supreme Good which philosophy seeks is not the good of a tree, or of a beast, or of God, but of man, he considers that we must first ask, What is man? As to this, his view is that there are two elements in man's nature, body and soul; and he has no doubt whatsoever that, of these two elements, the soul is the better and by far the more worthy. But is the soul by itself the man, so that the body is to the man as the horse is to the horseman? For the horseman is not a man and a horse, but only a man; and he is called a horseman because he stands in a certain relation to a horse. Or is the body by itself the man, standing in some such relation to the soul as that of a drinking vessel to drink? For it is not the drinking vessel and the drink that it contains which are together called the drinking vessel, but the vessel by itself; and the drinking vessel is so called because its purpose is to contain the drink. Or again, is it neither the soul by itself nor the body by itself that constitutes the man, but the two together, the soul and the body being each a part of him, but the whole man consisting of both? This relation is like that indicated when we call two horses yoked together a 'pair'. The horse on the right-hand side and the one on the left are both parts of the pair; but, no matter how closely they are linked to one another, we do not call either one of them a 'pair', but only both of them together.

Of these three possibilities, Varro chooses the third: he considers that man is neither the soul by itself nor the body by itself, but soul and body together. He therefore says that the Supreme Good of man, which makes him happy, consists in the combined goods of both his elements: that is, of soul and body. For this reason, he holds that the primary objects of nature are to be desired for their own sake, and that virtue also is to be so desired: virtue, which, as the art of living, is the most excellent of all the goods of the soul, and which is implanted by teaching. Therefore, when this virtue –

the art of conducting one's life – has received the primary objects of nature which existed without virtue, and before there was any instruction, she herself desires all these objects for their own sake, and at the same time seeks her own increase also. Thus she makes use of them and of herself simultaneously, so that she may delight in all of them and enjoy them all. This enjoyment may be greater or less, according as each of these goods is itself greater or less. Nonetheless, she rejoices in all of them, although, if necessity requires, she may disregard some of the lesser ones for the sake of attaining or preserving the greater.

Of all these goods, however, whether of soul or body, there is none whatsoever that virtue places above herself. For virtue makes good use both of herself and of all the other goods which make a man happy. But if she herself is not present, then, no matter how many goods there may be, they bring no good to him whose goods they are, and so they are not really to be called his 'goods'; for he uses these goods ill, and so they cannot be of benefit to him. This, therefore, is the life of man which is properly called happy: a life which enjoys virtue and the other goods of soul and body without which virtue cannot exist. But if a life enjoys any of those things, or many of them, which virtue can be without and still exist, it is happier still. And it is happiest of all if it enjoys all good things without exception, and does not lack even a single good of soul or body.

Life is not the same thing as virtue, since not every kind of life is virtue, but only a wisely conducted life. There can, however, be some kind of life without virtue, whereas virtue cannot exist without life. I might say the same of memory and reason, and of whatever other such faculties there are in man. These are present before any teaching. Indeed, there could not be any teaching without them; and so virtue also would be impossible without them, since virtue is certainly learned. On the other hand, the ability to run well, beauty of body, great physical strength and other such things can exist without virtue, just as virtue can exist without them. These things are nonetheless goods, however, and, according to our philosophers, virtue loves even these goods for their own sake, and uses and enjoys them in a way suitable to virtue.

The philosophers say also that this happy life is a social one: that it loves the good of friends as much as its own, and for their sake wishes for them what it wishes for itself. Such 'friends' may be

those who dwell in the same household, such as a man's wife and children and whatever servants he has. Or they may be those who dwell in the place where he has his home: in a city, for example, so that a man's fellow citizens are also his friends. Or the term may extend to the whole world, so that the nations with which a man is united by his membership of human society are his 'friends'; or even to the universe itself, which we call heaven and earth, and to those whom the philosophers call gods, whom they hold to be a wise man's friends. We, however, are more accustomed to call them 'angels'.⁵ Moreover, these philosophers deny that there can be any doubt as to the nature of the Final Good and its contrary, the Final Evil; and this, they assert, is what makes the difference between them and the members of the New Academy. Also, it does not matter to them in the least whether anyone who engages in philosophy adopts the dress and eating habits of the Cynics, or of anyone else, in his pursuit of those ends which they believe to be the true ones. Furthermore, of the three kinds of life – the leisured, the active, and the combination of both – they say that they favour the third. That these things were believed and taught by the Old Academy, Varro asserts on the authority of Antiochus, Cicero's master and his own; though Cicero seems to think that, in many respects, Antiochus had more in common with the Stoics than with the Old Academy. But what does that matter to us? For we ought to judge according to the facts of the case, rather than attaching great significance to knowing what other men have thought of them.

4 What Christians believe as to the Supreme Good and Evil, as against the philosophers, who have supposed that the Supreme Good lies in themselves

If, therefore, we are asked what response the City of God makes when questioned on each of these points, and, first, what it believes concerning the Final Good and Evil, we shall reply as follows: that eternal life is the Supreme Good, and eternal death the Supreme Evil, and that to achieve the one and avoid the other, we must live rightly. For this reason it is written, 'The just man lives by faith.'⁶

⁵ Cf. Heb. 1,14.

⁶ Hab. 2,4; Rom. 1,17; Gal. 3,11; Heb. 10,38.

For we do not yet see our good, and hence we must seek it by believing. Moreover, we cannot live rightly unless, while we believe and pray, we are helped by Him Who has given us the faith to believe that we must be helped by Him. The philosophers, however, have supposed that the Final Good and Evil are to be found in this life. They hold that the Supreme Good lies in the body, or in the soul, or in both (or, to state it more clearly, in pleasure, or in virtue, or in both); in rest, or in virtue, or in both; in the combination of pleasure and rest, or in virtue, or in both; in the primary objects of nature, or in virtue, or in both. With wondrous vanity, these philosophers have wished to be happy here and now, and to achieve blessedness by their own efforts. The Truth has mocked such philosophers in the words of the prophet: 'The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men' – or, as the apostle Paul gives the passage, 'The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise' – 'that they are vain'.⁷

For whose eloquence is sufficient, no matter how ready its flow, to depict all the miseries of this life? Cicero lamented them, to the best of his ability, in his *Consolatio de morte filiae*.⁸ But what did 'the best of his ability' amount to? For, indeed, when, where and how can what are called the primary objects of nature be possessed in this life with such certainty that they are not subject to the vicissitudes of chance? For is there any pain, the contrary of pleasure, any disquiet, the contrary of rest, that cannot befall a wise man's body? Certainly the amputation or decay of his limbs undermines a man's soundness; deformity ruins his beauty, sickness destroys his health, weakness his strength, lassitude his vigour, torpor or lethargy his activity. And is there any of these which may not assail the flesh of the wise man? The postures and movements of the body, when they are comely and appropriate, are numbered among the primary gifts of nature. But what if some disorder causes the limbs to tremble? What if a man's spine is so curved as to bring his hands to the ground, so that he becomes a kind of quadruped? Will not this subvert all the body's beauty and grace, whether it be at rest or in motion? And what of the primary goods, as they are called, of the mind itself? The two placed first are sensation and

⁷ Psalm 94,11; cf. 1 Cor. 3,20.

⁸ A treatise written in 45 BC, on the death of Cicero's daughter Tullia; it is also called *De luctu minuendo*. Only a few fragments survive; but see also Cicero's letters to Atticus.

intellect, because they enable us to grasp and perceive the truth. But what kind of sensation remains, and how much of it, if a man becomes blind and deaf, to say nothing of other disabilities? And to what place will reason and intelligence withdraw, where will they slumber, if a man is driven insane by some sickness? The mad say and do many absurd things, most of which are foreign to their intentions and dispositions: certainly to their good intentions and normal dispositions. When we contemplate or see people in this condition, and when we consider their plight fully, we can hardly refrain from weeping: perhaps we cannot do so at all. And what shall I say of those who suffer attacks of demonic possession? Where does their own intelligence lie hidden and buried while the malignant spirit makes use of their soul and body according to his own will? And who is certain that such an evil cannot befall a wise man in this life? Again, how can we perceive the truth while we are in this flesh, and to what extent? For, as we read in the trusty Book of Wisdom, 'The corruptible body presseth down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth upon many things.'⁹ Moreover, as to that impetus or desire towards action – if this is the right way to express in Latin what the Greeks call *hormé* – which is also reckoned to be one of the primary goods of nature:¹⁰ is not this the very impulse which, when sensation is deranged and reason asleep, produces those unhappy gestures and actions of the insane at which we shudder?

Then again, what of virtue itself, which is not one of the primary goods, because it supervenes on them later, introduced by teaching?¹¹ Although it occupies the highest place among human goods, what is its task in this world but to wage perpetual war against the vices? And these are, moreover, not external vices but internal ones: not the vices of others, but clearly ours and only ours. This war is waged especially by that virtue which the Greeks call *sophrosyné*, which is called 'temperance' in Latin:¹² the virtue which bridles the lusts of the flesh and prevents them from securing the consent of the mind and dragging it into every kind of wickedness. Indeed, vice is never not present; for, as the apostle says, 'The flesh lusteth

⁹ Wisd. 9,15.

¹⁰ Cf. Cicero, *De fin.*, 5,6,17; *De nat. deor.*, 2,22,58.

¹¹ Cf. Aristotle, *Nic. Eth.*, 2,3.

¹² Cf. Cicero, *Tusc. disp.*, 3,8,16.

against the Spirit.' To this vice, however, there is an opposing virtue, when, as the same apostle says, 'The spirit lusteth against the flesh'; 'for these', he says, 'are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would'.¹³ But what is it that we wish to achieve when we desire to be made perfect at last by the Supreme Good? Nothing but that the flesh should cease to lust against the spirit, and that there should be no vice in us for the spirit to lust against. We cannot manage to achieve this in our present life, no matter how much we may wish to. Let us, however, at least see to it that, with God's help, we do not succumb to the desires of the flesh which lusts against the spirit: that we do not allow ourselves to be drawn into committing sin by our own consent. God forbid, then, that, for as long as we are engaged in this internal warfare, we should believe that we have already attained that happiness: that happiness which we seek to attain by our victory. And who has achieved such a degree of wisdom that he no longer has to maintain any struggle against his lusts?

What of that virtue which is called prudence? Does she not devote the whole of her vigilance to distinguishing good things from bad, so that no error shall creep in as we seek to pursue good and avoid evil? And does not prudence herself thereby attest that we dwell in the midst of evils, or that evils dwell in us? For she teaches us that it is an evil thing to consent to sin, and a good thing not to consent to sin. But though prudence teaches us not to consent to evil, and temperance causes us not to consent, neither prudence nor temperance abolish such evil from our life. What of justice, the task of which is to give to each his due? (It is for this reason that there is established in man himself a certain just order of nature, such that the soul is subordinated to God and the body to the soul, and thus both body and soul are subordinated to God.) Does not justice, in performing this task, demonstrate that she is still labouring at her work rather than resting after having completed it? For, indeed, the less the soul is occupied with the contemplation of God, the less it is subordinated to God; and the more the desires of the flesh lust against the spirit, the less subordinate is the body to the soul. For as long, therefore, as there is in us this infirmity, this plague, this languor, how are we saved? And, if we are not saved, how shall

¹³ Gal. 5,17.

we dare to say that we are already blessed with that final happiness?

Again, that virtue whose name is fortitude, however great the wisdom with which she is accompanied, bears most evident witness to human ills; for it is precisely those ills which she is compelled to endure with patience. I wonder at the shamelessness of the Stoics. For they contend that such ills are not really ills at all, yet admit that if they should be so severe that a wise man cannot or should not bear them, he is compelled to put himself to death and depart from this life. Yet these men, in their stupid pride, believe that the Final Good is to be found in this life, and that they can achieve happiness by their own efforts. They believe that their wise man – that is, he whom, in their amazing vanity, they describe as such – even if he becomes blind, deaf and dumb; even if he is enfeebled in limb and tormented with pain; even if he falls victim to every other ill that can be described or imagined; even if he is compelled to put himself to death: that such a man would not shrink from calling such a life, beset with such ills, a happy one! O happy life, that seeks the aid of death to put an end to it! If this is happiness, let him remain in it; but if these ills compel him to flee from it, how is it happy? How can these things not be evil, when they overcome the good of fortitude and compel that same fortitude to yield to them? Not only that: how senseless it is to call a life happy and at the same time persuade a man to flee from it! Is anyone so blind that he does not see that a happy life would not be one from which one would wish to flee? If, on the other hand, it is to be fled from because of the weight of infirmity which it contains, then why do the Stoics not relinquish their stiff-necked pride and confess that it is miserable? Was it, I ask, patience which prompted Cato to slay himself, or impatience?¹⁴ For he would not have done this had he not been unable to bear the victory of Caesar. Where was his fortitude, then? It yielded; it succumbed: it was so completely overcome that it abandoned this 'happy life'; it deserted it and fled. Or was it no longer a happy life? It was, therefore, miserable; but, in that case, how can those things not be evils, which made life a misery worthy to be fled from?

Those who admit that such things are evils, therefore, as the Peripatetics do, and the Old Academy, the sect championed by

¹⁴ Cf. Bk 1,23.

Varro, are speaking in a way which is more tolerable. Even these, however, err wondrously when they contend that, in the midst even of evils so grievous that he who suffers them may rightly slay himself, life is nonetheless happy. 'The torments and agonies of the body', says Varro 'are evils, and they grow worse in proportion to their severity. To be free of them, you must flee from this life.' What life, I ask? 'This life', he replies, 'which is burdened with such great evils'. Is it happy, then, in the midst of those same evils by reason of which, you say, we should flee from it? Or do you call it happy because you are at least free to withdraw from these evils by death? What, then, if by some divine judgment you were held fast and not permitted to die, but not allowed to live without such evils either? In that case, surely, you would call such a life miserable? As it is, it is soon relinquished, no doubt; but this does not make it not miserable; for if it were eternal it would be miserable even in your judgment. It ought not to be regarded as free from misery, therefore, merely because the misery is brief. Nor should it be called a state of happiness, for this would be even more absurd.

There is great power in the evils which compel a man – and, according to those philosophers, even a wise man – to take away his own existence as a man. For they say – and they speak truly – that the first and greatest requirement of nature, so to speak, is that a man should cherish himself, and should for that reason naturally flee from death: that he should be a friend to himself, in that he should vehemently wish and desire to continue as a living creature and to remain alive in this conjunction of body and soul. There is, then, great power in those evils which defeat this natural feeling which makes us use all our strength in the endeavour to avoid death: evils which defeat it so completely that what was once shunned is now sought and longed for, and, if it cannot come from elsewhere, is inflicted on a man by himself. There is great power in those evils which make fortitude a murderer – if, indeed, it can still be called fortitude when it is so completely vanquished by those evils that it not only cannot by its endurance keep guard over the man whom it has undertaken to rule and protect, but is itself compelled to slay him. The wise man ought, indeed, to bear even death with patience; but a death that comes to him from elsewhere. If, however, he is compelled, as those philosophers say, to inflict it on himself, they must surely confess that the causes which compel him to commit

such a deed are not only evils, but insupportable evils. The life, therefore, which is burdened with such great and grievous ills, or subject to such chances, can by no means be called happy. At least, it would not be so called if those who, when overcome by the growing weight of ills, yield to unhappiness and put themselves to death would deign to surrender to the truth when overcome by sound reasoning. Let them no longer suppose that the Final and Supreme Good is something in which they may rejoice while in this mortal condition. For, in this condition, those very virtues than which nothing better or more advantageous is found in man clearly attest to his misery precisely by the great assistance that they give him in the midst of perils, hardships and sorrows.

True virtues, however, can exist only in those in whom there is true godliness; and these virtues do not claim that they can protect those in whom they are present against suffering any miseries. True virtues are not such liars as to claim such a thing. They do, however, claim that, though human life is compelled to be miserable by all the great evils of this world, it is happy in the hope of the world to come, and in the hope of salvation. For how else could it be happy, seeing that it is not yet saved? The apostle Paul, therefore – speaking not of men without prudence, without patience, without temperance or without justice, but of those who live according to true piety, and whose virtues are therefore true virtues – says, ‘For we are saved by hope. Now hope which is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.’¹⁵ As, therefore, we are saved by hope, it is in hope that we have been made happy; and as we do not yet possess a present salvation, but await salvation in the future, so we do not enjoy a present happiness, but look forward to happiness in the future, and ‘with patience’. We are in the midst of evils, and we must endure them with patience until we come to those good things where everything will bestow ineffable delight upon us, and where there will no longer be anything which we must endure. Such is the salvation which, in the world to come, will also itself be our final happiness. Yet these philosophers will not believe in this happiness because they do not see it. Thus, they endeavour

¹⁵ Rom. 8,24f.

to contrive for themselves an entirely false happiness, by means of a virtue which is as false as it is proud.

5 Of social life, which, though desirable, is often troubled by many ills

The philosophers also consider that the life of the wise man is a social one; and this is a view of which we much more readily approve. For we now have in hand the nineteenth book of this work on the City of God; and how could that City have first arisen and progressed along its way, and how could it achieve its proper end, if the life of the saints were not social? Who, however, could manage to number and weigh the great ills which abound in human society and the woes of this mortal condition? The philosophers should listen to a character in one of their own comedies, expressing a sentiment with which all men agree. 'I took a wife; what misery I found there! Children were born, and more cares came.'¹⁶ Again, what of the trials of love, also commemorated by Terence: 'Injuries, suspicions, hostilities and war; then, peace again'?¹⁷ Have not these trials everywhere filled up human affairs? Do they not many times arise even between friends whose love is honourable? Do we not know that human affairs are everywhere full of such undoubted evils: of injuries, suspicions, hostilities and war? And even peace is an uncertain good, since we do not know the hearts of those with whom we wish to maintain peace. Moreover, even if we could know them today, we should not know what they might be like in the future. In general, who are, or who ought to be, more friendly with one another than those who are contained within the same household? Yet who is secure even in such friendship as this, when such grievous ills have so often arisen even from the secret treachery of people within the same family? And these ills are bitter in proportion to the sweetness of the peace which, though believed to be true peace, was only a most clever pretence. It is for this reason that what Cicero says touches the hearts of all men and wrings a sigh from them: 'There is no treachery more insidious than that

¹⁶ Terence, *Adelphi*, 5,4,13f.

¹⁷ *Eunuch*, 1,1,14f.

concealed under a pretence of duty or by the name of kinship. For it is easily possible to guard against an open enemy, and thus evade him. But this hidden evil which is internal and domestic not only arises, but even overwhelms you before you can foresee and examine it.¹⁸ Hence also that divine saying, 'And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.'¹⁹ This is something that we hear with great sorrow of heart. For even if someone is strong enough to bear these ills with equanimity, or vigilant enough to guard against the malice of false friendship with foresight and prudence, nonetheless, if he is a good man, he cannot but be grievously pained by the perfidy of wicked men when he discovers how wicked they are. And this is so whether they were always wicked and their goodness merely feigned, or whether they have undergone a change from goodness to their present malice.

If, therefore, there is no security even in the home from the common evils which befall the human race, what of the city? The larger the city, the more is its forum filled with civil law-suits and criminal trials. Even when the city is at peace and free from actual sedition and civil war, it is never free from the danger of such disturbance or, more often, bloodshed.

6 Of the error of human judgments when the truth is hidden

What of those judgments passed by men upon their fellow-men, which cannot fail to be present in cities no matter how peaceful they remain? Do we not consider these things miserable and deplorable? For, indeed, those who give such judgment can never penetrate the consciences of those upon whom they pronounce it. Therefore they are often compelled to seek the truth by torturing innocent people merely because they are witnesses to the crimes of other men. And what of torture applied to a man in his own case? Here, the question is whether he is guilty or not; but he is tortured even if he is innocent. Thus, he suffers, for a doubtful crime, a punishment which is very certainly not doubtful; and he suffers it not because he is found to have committed the crime, but because

¹⁸ *In Verr.*, 2, 1, 15.

¹⁹ *Matt.* 10, 36.

it is not known that he did not commit it. For this reason, the ignorance of the judge is very often a calamity to the innocent. And what is still more intolerable – a thing to be greatly lamented and, if it were possible, bathed in fountains of tears – is the fact that the judge tortures the accused precisely so that he shall not, in his ignorance, slay an innocent man. In his wretched ignorance, therefore, he puts to death, tortured and innocent, the very man whom he had tortured to avoid putting the innocent to death! For if, acting according to the wisdom of the philosophers, the accused now chooses to flee from this life rather than endure those tortures any longer, he will confess to a crime which he has not committed. And when he has been condemned and put to death, the judge still does not know whether he has slain a guilty man or an innocent one, even after torturing him to avoid ignorantly slaying the innocent. In this case, he has tortured an innocent man in order to discover the truth, and has killed him while still not knowing it.

Given that social life is surrounded by such darkness, will the wise man take his seat on the judge's bench, or will he not venture to do so? Clearly, he will take his seat; for the claims of human society, which he thinks it wicked to abandon, constrain him and draw him to this duty. He does not think it a wickedness that innocent witnesses should be tortured in cases which are not their own, or that the accused are so often overcome by such great pain that they make false confessions and are punished in spite of their innocence. Nor does he think it wicked that, even if not condemned to die, they very often die under torture or as a result of torture; or that accusers are sometimes themselves condemned, even if their wish is to benefit human society by ensuring that crimes do not go unpunished. Witnesses may lie in giving testimony; the defendant himself may be obdurate under torture and refuse to confess; and so the accusers may not be able to prove the truth of their accusations, no matter how true those accusations may be, and the judge, in his ignorance, may condemn them. The philosopher does not consider that these many and grievous evils are sins; for he reflects that the wise judge does not act in this way through a wish to do harm. Rather, he does so because, on the one hand, ignorance is unavoidable, and, on the other, judgment is also unavoidable because human society compels it.

Here, therefore, granted that it does not arise out of malice on

the part of the wise judge, we certainly have an instance of what I call the wretchedness of man's condition. If it is through unavoidable ignorance and the unavoidable duty of judging that he tortures the innocent, then he himself is certainly not guilty. But is he also happy? Surely, it would be more compassionate, and more worthy of the dignity of man, if he were to acknowledge that the necessity of acting in this way is a miserable one: if he hated his own part in it, and if, with the knowledge of godliness, he cried out to God, 'From my necessities deliver Thou me.'²⁰

7 Of the diversity of tongues, by which
communication between men is prevented; and of
the misery of wars, even those which are called just

After the city or town comes the world, which the philosophers identify as the third level of human society. They begin with the household, progress to the city, and come finally to the world. And the world, like a gathering of waters, is all the more full of perils by reason of its greater size. First of all, the diversity of tongues now divides man from man. For if two men, each ignorant of the other's language, meet, and are compelled by some necessity not to pass on but to remain with one another, it is easier for dumb animals, even of different kinds, to associate together than these men, even though both are human beings. For when men cannot communicate their thoughts to each other, they are completely unable to associate with one another despite the similarity of their natures; and this is simply because of the diversity of tongues. So true is this that a man would more readily hold a conversation with his dog than with another man who is a foreigner. It is true that the Imperial City has imposed on subject nations not only her yoke but also her language, as a bond of peace and society, so that there should be no lack of interpreters but a great abundance of them.²¹ But how many great wars, what slaughter of men, what outpourings of human blood have been necessary to bring this about!

Those wars are now over; but the misery of these evils has not yet come to an end. For though there has been, and is now, no lack

²⁰ Psalm 25,17.

²¹ Cf. Valerius Maximus, 2,2,2.

of enemies among foreign nations, against whom wars have always been waged, and still are being waged, yet the very breadth of the Empire has produced wars of a worse kind: that is, social and civil wars. By these, the human race is made even more miserable, either by warfare itself, waged for the sake of eventual peace, or by the constant fear that conflict will begin again. I could not possibly give a suitably eloquent description of these many evils, these manifold disasters, these harsh and dire necessities. How lengthy this discourse would be, if I were to try to do so!

But the wise man, they say, will wage just wars. Surely, however, if he remembers that he is a human being, he will be much readier to deplore the fact that he is under the necessity of waging even just wars. For if they were not just, he would not have to wage them, and so there would then be no wars at all for a wise man to engage in. For it is the iniquity of the opposing side that imposes upon the wise man the duty of waging wars; and every man certainly ought to deplore this iniquity since, even if no necessity for war should arise from it, it is still the iniquity of men. Let everyone, therefore, who reflects with pain upon such great evils, upon such horror and cruelty, acknowledge that this is misery. And if anyone either endures them or thinks of them without anguish of soul, his condition is still more miserable: for he thinks himself happy only because he has lost all human feeling.

8 That we cannot rest secure in the friendship of
good men while the perils of this life compel us to
be anxious

In the miserable condition of this life, we often believe that someone who is an enemy is a friend, or that someone who is a friend is an enemy. This is a kind of ignorance similar to madness; and, if we escape it, is not the unfeigned faith and mutual delight of true and good friends our one consolation in the midst of the error and calamity with which human society is so full? Yet the more friends we have, and the more places we have them in, the further and more widely do we fear that some evil may befall them out of all the mass of the evils of this world. For not only are we anxious lest they be afflicted by famine, war, pestilence, or captivity, fearing that in slavery they may suffer evils beyond what we can conceive; also,

there is the much more bitter fear that their friendship will be transformed into perfidy, malice, and wickedness. And when such things do happen (and the more numerous our friends, the more often they happen) and the fact is brought to our knowledge, who, save one who has experienced the same thing, can understand the burning sorrow which then afflicts our hearts? Indeed, we would rather hear that our friends were dead; although this also we could not hear without pain: for if their life delighted us with the solace of friendship, how could it be that their death should not bring us grief? Anyone who forbids such grief must forbid, if he can, all friendly conversation: he must prohibit or extinguish affection; he must with ruthless disregard sever the ties of all human companionship, or else stipulate that such companionship must merely be made use of, without giving rise to any delight of soul. But if this can in no way be done, how can the death of one whose life has been sweet to us not bring us bitterness? For this is why the grief of a heart which is not inhuman is like a kind of wound or ulcer, healed by the application to it of our loving words of consolation. And though healing takes place all the more quickly and easily when the soul is well conditioned, we must not suppose that there is nothing at all to heal in such a case.

The life of mortal men, then, is afflicted, sometimes more lightly, but sometimes more harshly, by the death of those whom we love most dearly; and this is especially true of those who discharge duties which are necessary for human society. Yet we would rather hear of, or even see, the death of those we love, than learn that they have fallen away from faith or good morals: that is, that they have died in their very soul.

The earth is full of this great mass of evils. For this reason, it is written, 'Is not the life of man upon earth a temptation?'²² For this reason again, the Lord Himself says, 'Woe to the world because of offences';²³ and again, 'Because iniquity abounded, the love of many shall wax cold.'²⁴ Hence, when good men who are our friends die, we are pleased for their sake. For, though their death saddens us, we find our more certain consolation in this: that they are now

²² Job 7,1 (LXX).

²³ Matt. 18,7.

²⁴ Matt. 24,12.

beyond those evils by which even good men are crushed or made wicked in this life, or are put in danger of both these things.

9 Of the friendship of the holy angels, which men cannot be sure of in this life, thanks to the deceit of the demons who hold in thrall those who worship many gods

The philosophers who have wished to say that the gods are our friends²⁵ place the fellowship of the holy angels on the fourth level; for they now proceed from the three levels of society on earth to the whole universe, including, in some degree, even heaven itself. And, indeed, we have no reason at all to fear that such friends as these will sadden us either by dying or by becoming wicked. They do not, however, mingle with us on such familiar terms as men do: this in itself is one of the sources of sadness which belong to this life. Also, as we read, Satan sometimes transforms himself into an angel of light,²⁶ to tempt those who stand in need of discipline, or who deserve to be deceived. Hence, the great mercy of God is necessary to prevent anyone from supposing that he has the friendship of good angels when he has wicked demons as his false friends. For, otherwise, he will suffer the enmity of those whose hurtfulness is in proportion to their cunning and deceit. To whom, indeed, is the great mercy of God most necessary, if not to those who, in the great misery of human life, are so burdened with ignorance that they are easily deceived by the devices of those demons? The philosophers of the ungodly city have said that the gods are their friends. It is entirely certain, however, that they have, in fact, come under the sway of those malign demons to whom the whole of that city is subject, and with whom it will suffer eternal punishment. For the nature of the beings who are worshipped in that city is made sufficiently clear by the sacred – or, rather, the sacrilegious – rites by which they are worshipped, and by the most unclean performances in which their crimes are celebrated, by which their votaries think that they must be propitiated. For it is the demons themselves who require and exact so many displays of such disgraceful things.

²⁵ Cf. Bk IX, 23.

²⁶ Cf. I Cor. 11, 14.

**10 The reward prepared for the saints after they
have endured the temptations of this life**

But not even holy and faithful worshippers of the one true and supreme God are secure from the deceits and manifold temptations of the demons. Indeed, in this place of infirmity, and in these evil days, such anxiety is not without its uses; for it leads them to seek more fervently that state of security where peace is most full and most certain. For, there, the gifts of nature – that is, the gifts bestowed upon our nature by the Creator of all natures – will be not only good but also everlasting. And this is true not only of the spirit, which is healed by wisdom, but of the body also, which will be renewed by resurrection. There, the virtues will not be called upon to strive against any vice or evil whatsoever. Rather, they will possess the prize of victory: the eternal peace which no adversary can disturb.

This is our final happiness, our last perfection, a consummation which will have no end. Here, in this world, we are said to be happy when we have such little peace as a good life can afford. But such happiness is found to be mere misery in comparison with that happiness which we call final. When, therefore, if we live rightly, we mortal men have such peace as there can be in mortal affairs, virtue makes right use of the blessings of peace. Moreover, even when we do not have that peace, virtue makes good use of the ills which a man suffers. But virtue is true virtue only when it directs all the good things of which it makes good use, and all that it does in making good use of good and evil things, and itself also, towards that end where our peace will be so perfect and so great that it can be neither better nor greater.

**11 Of the happiness of eternal peace, which is the
end or true perfection of the saints**

We may say of peace, then, what we have already said of eternal life: that it is our Final Good. This is especially true in the light of what is said in the holy psalm concerning the subject of this laborious discourse, the City of God: 'Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Sion. For He hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; He hath blessed thy children within thee, Who hath made

thy borders peace.'²⁷ For when the bars of her gates shall be strengthened, none shall enter her or go out from her. Thus, we should understand the peace of her borders to be a reference to that final peace which we here wish to demonstrate. The name of the City itself, that is, Jerusalem, has a mystic significance; for, as I have said already, it means 'Vision of Peace'.

The word 'peace', however, is frequently used in connexion with merely mortal affairs, where there is certainly no eternal life; and so I have preferred to use the expression 'eternal life' rather than 'peace' in depicting the end of this City, where its Supreme Good will be found. Of this end the apostle says, 'But now, being freed from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end life eternal.'²⁸ On the other hand, those who have no familiarity with Holy Scripture may suppose that the life of the wicked also is eternal life. They may think this because, even according to some of their own philosophers, the soul is immortal. Or they may think it because of our own faith in the endless punishment of the ungodly, believing that these surely could not be tortured for ever unless they lived for ever. Thus, in order that everyone may more easily understand what we mean, let us say that the end of this City, in which it will possess its Supreme Good, is to be called either 'peace in life eternal' or 'life eternal in peace'. For peace is so great a good that, even in the sphere of earthly and mortal affairs, we hear no word more thankfully, and nothing is desired with greater longing: in short, it is not possible to find anything better. If I wish to speak at somewhat greater length on the subject, therefore, this will not, I think, be a burden to my readers. They will attend both for the sake of understanding the end of the City which is the subject of this discourse, and also for the sake of the sweetness of peace, which all men love.

12 That even the ferocity of war and all the discords
of men have, as their end, the peace which every
nature desires

Whoever who joins me in an examination, however cursory, of human affairs and our common human nature will acknowledge

²⁷ Psalm 147, 12ff.

²⁸ Rom. 6, 22.

that, just as there is no one who does not wish to be joyful, so there is no one who does not wish to have peace. Indeed, even when men choose to wage war, they desire nothing but victory. By means of war, therefore, they desire to achieve peace with glory; for what else is victory but the subjugation of those who oppose us? And when this is achieved, there will be peace. Wars themselves, then, are conducted with the intention of peace, even when they are conducted by those who are concerned to exercise their martial prowess in command and battle. Hence it is clear that peace is the desired end of war. For every man seeks peace, even in making war; but no one seeks war by making peace. Indeed, even those who wish to disrupt an existing state of peace do so not because they hate peace, but because they desire the present peace to be exchanged for one of their own choosing. Their desire, therefore, is not that there should be no peace, but that it should be the kind of peace that they wish for. And even when they have separated themselves from others by sedition, they cannot bring about what they intend unless they maintain at least some kind of peace with their co-conspirators or confederates. Indeed, even robbers wish to have peace with their fellows, if only in order to invade the peace of others with greater force and safety. One robber may, of course, be so unsurpassed in strength, and so suspicious of others, that he does not trust any accomplice, but plots his crimes and commits his robberies and murders on his own. Even he, however, maintains some shadow of peace, at least with those whom he cannot kill, and from whom he wishes to conceal his deeds. Also, he is at pains to ensure peace in his own household, with his wife and children and whomever else he has there. Without doubt he takes delight in their obedience to his nod, and, if this does not happen, he is angry. He rebukes and punishes; and, if necessary, he employs harsh measures to impose upon his household a peace which, he believes, cannot exist unless all the other members of the same domestic society are subject to one head; and this head, in his own house, is himself. Thus, if he were offered the servitude of a larger number – of a city, or of a nation – who would serve him in just the same way as he had required his household to serve him, then he would no longer lurk like a robber in his lair; he would raise himself up as a king for all to see. But the same greed and malice would remain in him. All men, then, desire to have peace with their own people, whom they

wish to see living according to their will. For they wish to make even those against whom they wage wars their own if they can, and to subdue them by imposing upon them the laws of their own peace.

Let us, however, consider a creature depicted in poetry and fable:²⁹ a creature so unsociable and wild that people have preferred to call him a semi-man rather than a man. His kingdom was the solitude of an awful cavern, and he was so singular in his wickedness that a name was found for him reflecting that fact – for he was called Cacus, and *kakos* is the Greek word for ‘wicked’. He had no wife with whom to give and receive caresses; no children to play with when little or to instruct when a little bigger; and no friends with whom to enjoy converse, not even his father Vulcan. He was happier than his father only in not having begotten another such monster as himself. He gave nothing to anyone; rather, he took what he wanted from anyone he could and whenever he could. Despite all this, however, in the solitude of his own cave, the floor of which, as Virgil describes it, ever reeked with the blood of recent butchery, he wished for nothing other than a peace in which no one should molest him, and a rest which no man’s violence, or the fear of it, should disturb. Also, he desired to be at peace with his own body; and in so far as he had such peace, all was well with him. For he governed his members, and they obeyed him. His mortal nature rebelled against him when it needed anything, and stirred up the sedition of hunger, which threatened to banish and exclude the soul from the body; and so he made haste to pacify that nature as far as possible: he hunted, slew and devoured. Thus, for all his monstrous and wild savagery, his aim was peace; for he sought, by these monstrous and ferocious means, only to preserve the peace of his own life. Thus, had he been willing to make with other men the peace which he was ready enough to make in his own cave and with himself, he would not have been called wicked, nor a monster, nor a semi-man. Or if it was the appearance of his body and his vomiting of smoke and flames that frightened away human companions, perhaps it was not the desire to do harm that made him so ferocious, but the necessity of preserving his own life. Or perhaps he never existed after all, or, more probably, was not as the poets have in their vanity described him as being. For if Cacus had not been

²⁹ Virgil, *Aen.*, 8, 190ff.

excessively blamed, Hercules would have been less fulsomely praised for slaying him. As in the case of many such poetic fictions, therefore, the existence of such a man – or rather, as I have said, semi-man – is not to be believed in.

Even the most savage beasts, then, from whom Cacus derived the ferocious part of his nature (for he is also called a semi-beast) protect their own kind by a kind of peace. They mate, they beget and bear young, and they rear and nourish them. They do this even when, as in most cases, they are unsocial and solitary: when they are not, that is, like sheep, deer, doves, starlings, and bees, but like lions, wolves, foxes, eagles and owls. What tigress does not purr softly over her cubs and lay her fierceness aside while she caresses them? What kite, solitary as he is while hovers over his prey, does not take a mate, make a nest, help to hatch the eggs, rear the chicks, and preserve with the mother of his family, as it were, a domestic society which is as peaceful as he can make it? How much more strongly, then, is a man drawn by the laws of his nature, so to speak, to enter into a similarly peaceful association with his fellow men, so far as it lies within his power to do so? For even the wicked wage war only to maintain the peace of their own people. They wish to make all men their own people, if they can, so that all men and all things might serve one master; but how could that happen, unless they should consent to be at peace with him, either through love or fear?

Thus, pride is a perverted imitation of God. For pride hates a fellowship of equality under God, and wishes to impose its own dominion upon its equals, in place of God's rule. Therefore, it hates the just peace of God, and it loves its own unjust peace; but it cannot help loving peace of some kind or other. For no vice is so entirely contrary to nature as to destroy even the last vestiges of nature.

Thus, he who has learnt to prefer right to wrong and the rightly ordered to the perverse, sees that, in comparison with the peace of the just, the peace of the unjust is not worthy to be called peace at all. Even that which is perverse, however, must of necessity be in, or derived from, or associated with, and to that extent at peace with, some part of the order of things among which it has its being or of which it consists. Otherwise, it would not exist at all. For example, if someone were to hang upside-down, this position of the body and

disposition of the limbs would certainly be a perverted one. For what nature places above would be beneath, and what nature intends to be beneath would be above. This perversity disturbs the peace of the flesh, and therefore causes distress. Nonetheless, the spirit is at peace with its body and strives to secure its health: it is precisely for that reason that there is pain. And even if the spirit is driven out of the body by the latter's distresses, still, as long as the disposition of the body's members remains intact, what is left is not without a kind of peace: which is why there is still something to hang there. And if the earthly body presses down towards the ground, and strains against the bond by which it is suspended, it tends towards the position of its own peace, and by the voice of its own weight, so to speak, entreats a place where it may rest. And so even when lifeless and without any sensation, it does not depart from the peace of its natural position, either while occupying that position or tending towards it. Again, if remedies and preservatives are applied to prevent the dissolution and decomposition of the corpse in its present form, a kind of peace still joins one part to another and maintains the whole mass in an earthly condition which is suitable, and in that sense peaceable. If, on the other hand, no such treatment is applied, and the body is abandoned to the usual course of nature, there is for a while a kind of tumult of exhalations which are disagreeable and offensive to our senses (that is, the stench of decay of which we are aware). This persists until the body unites with the elements of the world and, little by little, particle by particle, passes away into their peace.

In all this, however, nothing is in any way removed from the sway of the laws made by the supreme Creator and Ordainer Who directs the peace of the universe. For although minute animals are produced in the carcase of a larger animal, all those little bodies, by the same law of their Creator, serve their little spirits in the peace that preserves their lives. Even when the flesh of dead animals is devoured by other animals, it still finds itself subject to the same laws: to the laws which are distributed throughout the universe for the preservation of every kind of mortal creature, and which give peace by bringing suitable things suitably together. This is true no matter where it is taken, no matter with what substances it is joined, and no matter what substances it is converted and changed into.

13 Of the universal peace which the law of nature preserves through all disturbances, and by which, through God's ordinance, everyone comes to his just desert

The peace of the body, therefore, lies in the balanced ordering of its parts; the peace of the irrational soul lies in the rightly ordered disposition of the appetites; the peace of the rational soul lies in the rightly ordered relationship of cognition and action; the peace of body and soul lies in the rightly ordered life and health of a living creature; peace between mortal man and God is an ordered obedience, in faith, under an eternal law; and peace between men is an ordered agreement of mind with mind. The peace of a household is an ordered concord, with respect to command and obedience, of those who dwell together; the peace of a city is an ordered concord, with respect to command and obedience, of the citizens; and the peace of the Heavenly City is a perfectly ordered and perfectly harmonious fellowship in the enjoyment of God, and of one another in God.³⁰ The peace of all things lies in the tranquillity of order; and order is the disposition of equal and unequal things in such a way as to give to each its proper place.

The wretched, however, insofar as they are wretched, are clearly not in a condition of peace. Therefore, they lack that tranquillity of order in which there is no disturbance. Precisely because of their misery, however, even they cannot be said to lie beyond the sphere of order; for they are miserable deservedly and justly. They are not, indeed, united with the blessed; yet it is by the law of order that they are severed from them. And when they become accustomed to the condition in which they are, with at any rate some degree of harmony, they are then without disturbance of mind. Thus, they have among them some tranquillity of order, and therefore some peace. But they are still wretched, simply because, although they are to some extent serene and free from pain, they are not in that place where they would be wholly serene and free from pain. They would, however, be all the more wretched if they were not at peace with that law according to which the natural order is organised. For when they suffer, their peace is disturbed in the part where they

³⁰ Cf. Augustine, *De doct. Christ.*, 1,35,32.

suffer; yet there is still peace in that part which does not feel the pain of burning, and in so far as their nature is not dissolved. Just as there can be life without pain, therefore, but no pain without life, so there can be peace without any war, but no war without some degree of peace. This is not because of the nature of war itself, but because war can only be waged by or within persons who are in some sense natural beings: beings who could not exist at all if peace of some kind did not exist within them.

There exists, then, a nature in which there is no evil, and in which evil cannot exist at all. But there cannot exist a nature in which there is no good. Hence, in so far as it is a nature, not even the nature of the devil himself is evil. It is perversion that makes it evil. Thus, the devil did not abide in the truth, but he did not escape the judgment of the Truth. He did not remain in the tranquillity of order, but he did not thereby avoid the power of the Ordainer. The good imparted by God, which the devil has in his nature, does not remove him from God's justice, by which his punishment is ordained; nor does God punish the good which He has created, but the evil which the devil has committed. Moreover, God does not take away everything that He gave to that nature. He removes something, yet He leaves something also, so that there may be something left to feel pain at what has been taken away. And this pain itself testifies to both the good that was taken away and the good that is left; for, if there had been no good left, there could be no grief for the good which was taken away. He who sins is in a worse condition still if he rejoices in the loss of righteousness; but the sinner who suffers grief, even though he acquires no good thereby, is at least grieving at the loss of salvation. For righteousness and salvation are both goods, and the loss of any good is a matter for grief rather than rejoicing: if, that is, the loss is not counteracted by the gain of a greater good; for instance, righteousness of soul is a greater good than health of body. It is more fitting, therefore, for an unrighteous man to grieve over his punishment than to rejoice in his fault. Hence, just as the delight in forsaking good which a man takes when he sins is evidence of a bad will, so the grief which he feels at the loss of good when he is punished is evidence of a good nature. For when a man grieves over the loss of his nature's peace, his grief arises from some remnants of that peace, whereby his nature befriends itself. Moreover, it is right that, in the final

punishment, the wicked and ungodly should in their torments lament the loss of their natural goods, knowing that they have been most justly deprived of those goods by the God Whom they despised when He most graciously bestowed them.

God, therefore, is the most wise Creator and just Ordainer of all natures, Who has established the mortal human race as the greatest adornment of things earthly, and Who has given to men certain good things appropriate to this life. These are: temporal peace, in proportion to the short span of a mortal life, consisting in bodily health and soundness, and the society of one's own kind; and all things necessary for the preservation and recovery of this peace. These latter include those things which are appropriate and accessible to our senses, such as light, speech, breathable air, drinkable water, and whatever the body requires to feed, clothe, shelter, heal or adorn it. And these things are given under a most fair condition: that every mortal who makes right use of these goods suited to the peace of mortal men shall receive ampler and better goods, namely, the peace of immortality and the glory and honour appropriate to it, in an eternal life made fit for the enjoyment of God and of one's neighbour in God. He who uses temporal goods ill, however, shall lose them, and shall not receive eternal goods either.

**14 Of the order and law which hold sway in heaven
and on earth, according to which it comes to pass
that human society is served by those who rule it**

In the earthly city, then, the whole use of temporal things is directed towards the enjoyment of earthly peace. In the Heavenly City, however, such use is directed towards the enjoyment of eternal peace. Thus, if we were irrational animals, we should desire nothing beyond the proper arrangement of the body's parts and the satisfaction of our appetites. We should, that is, desire only fleshly comfort and an abundant supply of pleasures, so that the body's peace might produce peace of soul. For if bodily peace is lacking, the peace of the irrational soul is also impeded, because it cannot achieve the satisfaction of its appetites. The two kinds of peace together, however, produce that mutual relation of body and soul which gives rise to an ordered harmony of life and health. For all living creatures show their love of bodily peace when they shun pain, and of peace

of soul when they seek pleasure in order to satisfy the demands of their appetites. In the same way, they show clearly enough by shunning death how greatly they delight in that peace which consists in an harmonious relation of soul and body.

But because there is in man a rational soul, he subordinates all that he has in common with the beasts to the peace of that rational soul. He does this so that his mind may engage to some degree in contemplation, and so that he may in some degree act according to such contemplation, thereby displaying that ordered agreement of thought and action which, as we have said, constitutes the peace of the rational soul. And, for this purpose, he should wish to be neither distressed by pain, nor disturbed by desire, nor extinguished by death, so that he may arrive at some useful knowledge and regulate his life and morals according to that knowledge. But he has need of divine guidance, which he may obey with confidence, and of divine aid, so that he may obey it freely. Otherwise, in his zeal for knowledge, he may fall into some deadly error because of the infirmity of the human mind. Also, for as long as he is in this mortal body, he is a pilgrim, far from the Lord; and so he walks by faith, not by sight.³¹ That is why he refers all peace, whether of body or of soul, or of both, to that peace which mortal man has with the immortal God, so that he may exhibit an ordered obedience, in faith, to the eternal Law.

Now God, our Master, teaches two chief precepts: that is, love of God and love of neighbour. In these precepts, a man finds three things which he is to love: God, himself, and his neighbour; for a man who loves God does not err in loving himself. It follows, therefore, that he will take care to ensure that his neighbour also loves God, since he is commanded to love his neighbour as himself. Also, as far as he can, he will do the same for his wife, his children, his servants, and all other men. And, to the same end, he will wish his neighbour to do the same for him, if he should have need of such help. In this way, he will be at peace with all men as far as in him lies: there will be that peace among men which consists in well-ordered concord. And the order of this concord is, first, that a man should harm no one, and, second, that he should do good to all, so far as he can. In the first place, therefore, he must care for his own

³¹ Cf. 2 Cor. 5,6f.

household; for the order of nature and of human society itself gives him readier access to them, and greater opportunity of caring for them. Hence, the apostle says, 'But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.'³² In this care lies the foundation of domestic peace: that is, of an ordered concord with respect to command and obedience among those who dwell together. For commands are given by those who care for the rest – by husband to wife, parents to children, and masters to servants. And those who are cared for obey: women obey their husbands, children their parents, and servants their masters. In the household of the just man, however, who 'lives by faith' and who is still a pilgrim on his way to that Heavenly City, even those who command are the servants of those whom they seem to command. For it is not out of any desire for mastery that they command; rather, they do so from a dutiful concern for others: not out of pride in ruling, but because they love mercy.

15 Of the liberty which belongs to man's nature, and the servitude introduced by sin: a servitude such that the man whose will is wicked is the slave of his own lust, even though he is free in relation to other men

This is prescribed by the order of nature: it is thus that God created man; for He said, 'Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every creeping thing which creepeth on the earth.'³³ He did not intend that His rational creature, made in His own image, should have lordship over any but irrational creatures: not man over man, but man over the beasts. Hence, the first just men were established as shepherds of flocks, rather than as kings of men. This was done so that in this way also God might indicate what the order of nature requires, and what the desert of sinners demands. For we believe that it is with justice that a condition of servitude is imposed on the sinner. That is why we do not read the word 'slave' anywhere in the Scriptures until Noah,

³² 1 Tim. 5.8.

³³ Gen. 1.26.

the just man, punished his son's sin with this name.³⁴ That son deserved this name, then, not because of his nature, but because of his fault. The Latin word for slave [*servus*] is believed to have derived its origin from the fact that those who might have been slain under the laws of war were sometimes spared [*servabantur*] by the victors, and so were called *servi* because they had been preserved. But even this preservation could not have come about other than through the deserts of sin. For even when a just war is waged, it is in defence of his sin that he against whom it is waged is fighting; and every victory, even when it goes to the wicked, is a humiliation inflicted upon the conquered by divine judgment, either to correct their sins or to punish them. Daniel, a man of God, bears witness to this when, in captivity, he confesses to God his own sins and the sins of his people, and in pious grief testifies that they are the cause of that captivity.³⁵

The first cause of servitude, therefore, is sin, by which man was placed under man in a condition of bondage: a condition which can come about only by the judgment of God, in Whom there is no injustice, and Who knows how to distribute different punishments according to the merits of the offenders. As the Lord on high says, 'Every one who doeth sin is the servant of sin.'³⁶ Thus, while many godly persons are the slaves of unrighteous masters, the masters whom they serve are themselves not free men; 'for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage'.³⁷ Clearly, it is a happier lot to be the slave of a man than of a lust: indeed, the lust for mastery, to say nothing of any other, is itself the harshest kind of mastery, which lays waste the hearts of mortal men. However, in that order of peace which prevails among men when some are placed under others, humility is as profitable to those who serve as pride is harmful to those who rule.

By nature, then, in the condition in which God first created man, no man is the slave either of another man or of sin. But it is also true that servitude itself is ordained as a punishment by that law which enjoins the preservation of the order of nature, and forbids its disruption. For if nothing had been done in violation of that law,

³⁴ Gen. 9,25.

³⁵ Dan. 9,3ff.

³⁶ John 8,34.

³⁷ 2 Pet. 2,19.

there would have been no need for the discipline of servitude as a punishment. The apostle therefore admonishes servants to be obedient to their masters, and to serve them loyally and with a good will, so that, if they cannot be freed by their masters, they can at least make their own slavery to some extent free.³⁸ They can do this by serving not with cunning fear, but in faithful love, until all unrighteousness shall cease, and all authority and power be put down, that God may be all in all.³⁹

16 Of equitable rule

Therefore, though our righteous fathers had slaves, and ordered their domestic peace in such a way as to distinguish between the condition of their children and that of their slaves in respect of the temporal goods of this life; yet, in the matter of the worship of God – in Whom we must place our hope of eternal goods – they showed equal concern for all members of their household. This is what the order of nature prescribes: so much so that this is the origin of the name *paterfamilias*, a name now so generally used that even those who rule unjustly rejoice in being called by it. But those who are truly ‘fathers of their families’ are as much concerned for the welfare of all in their households, in respect of the worship and service of God, as if they were all their children. They desire and pray that they may all come to that heavenly home, where the duty of commanding mortal men will no longer be necessary because there will no longer be a necessary duty of caring for the welfare of those who now enjoy the happiness of immortality. Until that home is reached, however, fathers have a duty to exercise their mastery which is greater than that of slaves to endure their servitude. If anyone in the household is an enemy to domestic peace because of his disobedience, he is corrected by a word, or by a blow, or by whatever other kind of punishment is just and lawful, to the extent permitted by human society; but this is for the benefit of the person corrected, so that he may be readmitted to the peace from which he has sundered himself. For just as it is not an act of kindness to help someone if he thereby loses a greater good, so it is not a blame-

³⁸ Cf. Eph. 6,5.

³⁹ Cf. 1 Cor. 15,24; 28.

less act to spare someone if he thereby falls into a graver sin. If we are to be blameless, therefore, our duty includes not only doing no harm to anyone, but also restraining him from sin or punishing his sin, so that either he who is chastised may be corrected by his experience, or others may be warned by his example.

A man's household, then, ought to be the beginning, or a little part, of the city; and every beginning has reference to some end proper to itself, and every part has reference to the integrity of the whole of which it is a part. From this, it appears clearly enough that domestic peace has reference to civic peace: that is, that the ordered concord of domestic rule and obedience has reference to the ordered concord of civic rule and obedience. Thus, it is fitting that the father of a family should draw his own precepts from the law of the city, and rule his household in such a way that it is brought into harmony with the city's peace.

17 What produces peace, and what discord, between the Heavenly City and the earthly

But a household of men who do not live by faith strives to find an earthly peace in the goods and advantages which belong to this temporal life. By contrast, a household of men who live by faith looks forward to the blessings which are promised as eternal in the life to come; and such men make use of earthly and temporal things like pilgrims: they are not captivated by them, nor are they deflected by them from their progress towards God. They are, of course, sustained by them, so that they may more easily bear the burdens of the corruptible body which presses down the soul; but they do not in the least allow these things to increase such burdens.

Thus both kinds of men and both kinds of household make common use of those things which are necessary to this mortal life; but each has its own very different end in using them. So also, the earthly city, which does not live by faith, desires an earthly peace, and it establishes an ordered concord of civic obedience and rule in order to secure a kind of co-operation of men's wills for the sake of attaining the things which belong to this mortal life. But the Heavenly City – or, rather, that part of it which is a pilgrim in this condition of mortality, and which lives by faith – must of necessity make use of this peace also, until this mortal state, for which such

peace is necessary, shall have passed away. Thus, it lives like a captive and a pilgrim, even though it has already received the promise of redemption, and the gift of the Spirit as a kind of pledge of it. But, for as long as it does so, it does not hesitate to obey the laws of the earthly city, whereby the things necessary for the support of this mortal life are administered. In this way, then, since this mortal condition is common to both cities, a harmony is preserved between them with respect to the things which belong to this condition.

But the earthly city has had among its members certain wise men whose doctrines are rejected by the divine teaching. Deceived either by their own speculations or by demons, these philosophers believed that there are many gods who must be induced to take an interest in human affairs. They believed also that these gods have, as it were, different spheres of influence with different offices attached to them. Thus the body is the responsibility of one god, the mind that of another; and, within the body, one god has charge of the head, another of the neck, and so on with each of the parts in turn. Similarly, within the mind, one god is responsible for intelligence, another for learning, another for anger, another for desire. And so too with all the things which touch our lives: there is a god who has charge of cattle, of corn, of wine, of oil, of woodlands, of money, of navigation, of war and victory, of marriage, of birth, of fertility, and so on. But the Heavenly City knows only one God Who is to be worshipped, and it decrees, with faithful piety, that to Him alone is to be given that service which the Greeks call *latreia*, and which is due only to God. Because of this difference, it has not been possible for the Heavenly City to have laws of religion in common with the earthly city. It has been necessary for her to dissent from the earthly city in this regard, and to become a burden to those who think differently. Thus, she has had to bear the brunt of the anger and hatred and persecutions of her adversaries, except insofar as their minds have sometimes been struck by the multitude of the Christians and by the divine aid always extended to them.

Therefore, for as long as this Heavenly City is a pilgrim on earth, she summons citizens of all nations and every tongue, and brings together a society of pilgrims in which no attention is paid to any differences in the customs, laws, and institutions by which earthly peace is achieved or maintained. She does not rescind or destroy these things, however. For whatever differences there are among

the various nations, these all tend towards the same end of earthly peace. Thus, she preserves and follows them, provided only that they do not impede the religion by which we are taught that the one supreme and true God is to be worshipped. And so even the Heavenly City makes use of earthly peace during her pilgrimage, and desires and maintains the co-operation of men's wills in attaining those things which belong to the mortal nature of man, in so far as this may be allowed without prejudice to true godliness and religion. Indeed, she directs that earthly peace towards heavenly peace: towards the peace which is so truly such that – at least so far as rational creatures are concerned – only it can really be held to be peace and called such. For this peace is a perfectly ordered and perfectly harmonious fellowship in the enjoyment of God, and of one another in God. When we have reached that peace, our life will no longer be a mortal one; rather, we shall then be fully and certainly alive. There will be no animal body to press down the soul by its corruption, but a spiritual body standing in need of nothing: a body subject in every part to the will. This peace the Heavenly City possesses in faith while on its pilgrimage, and by this faith it lives righteously, directing towards the attainment of that peace every good act which it performs either for God, or – since the city's life is inevitably a social one – for neighbour.

18 How different the doubts of the New Academy are from the certainty of the Christian faith

Varro asserts that the defining characteristic of the New Academy is its view that all things are uncertain. The City of God, however, wholly detests such doubt, which it regards as madness. In regard to matters which it apprehends by mind and reason, it has the most certain knowledge, even if that knowledge is limited because of the corruptible body which presses down the soul; for, as the apostle says, 'We know in part.'⁴⁰ In every case, it also trusts the evidence of the senses, by means of which the mind makes use of the body; and it regards anyone who supposes that the senses can never be trusted as miserably in error. It believes also in the Holy Scriptures, the Old Testament and the New, which we call canonical, from

⁴⁰ 1 Cor. 13,9.

which comes the faith by which the just live, and by which we walk without doubting while we are pilgrims journeying towards the Lord. For as long as this faith is whole and certain, however, we may without just reproach have doubts regarding certain things: things which we have not perceived either by sense or reason, and which have not been revealed to us by the canonical Scriptures, nor become known to us through witnesses whom it would be absurd not to believe.

19 Of the dress and manners of the Christian people

The dress or manner of life adopted by whoever embraces the faith that leads to God does not matter to the Heavenly City, provided that these things do not contravene the divine precepts. Hence, when philosophers become Christians, they are required to change their false doctrines; but they are not compelled to change their dress or their customary mode of life, for these are not an impediment to religion. Thus, the behaviour which Varro noted as a defining characteristic of the Cynics does not matter in the least, provided that there is nothing indecent or immoderate about it. As for the three kinds of life – the life of leisure, the life of action, and the combination of both: a Christian might conduct his life in any of these ways and still attain to everlasting rewards, provided that he does so without prejudice to his faith. And it is, of course, important also that he loves the truth and performs the duties of charity. For no one ought to live a life of leisure in such a way that he takes no thought in that leisure for the welfare of his neighbour; nor ought he to be so active as to feel no need for the contemplation of God. The delight offered by a life of leisure ought to consist not in idle inactivity, but in the opportunity to seek and find the truth, so that everyone may make progress in this regard, and not jealously withhold his discoveries from others. In the active life, on the other hand, we are not to love the honour or power which this kind of life affords, since ‘all things under the sun are vanity’.⁴¹ Rather, as we have explained above,⁴² we should seek to use that same honour or power righteously and beneficially, for the wellbeing of those

⁴¹ Eccl. 1.14.

⁴² Cf. Ch. 14.

under us, according to the will of God. It is for this reason that the apostle says, 'He that desireth the episcopate desireth a good work.'⁴³ He wished to explain what 'episcopate' means, and to show that it is the name of a duty, not an honour. It is a Greek word, and its sense is that a man who is set over others 'oversees' them, that is, bears a responsibility for them. For *epi* means 'over' and *skopein* is 'to see'. If we so wish, therefore, we can translate *episcopein* into Latin as 'to oversee'. Hence, a bishop who takes delight in ruling rather than in doing good is no true bishop.⁴⁴

No one, then, is forbidden to seek knowledge of the truth, for it is praiseworthy to spend one's leisure in this way. But it is unseemly to covet a high position, even though a people cannot be ruled without it, and even if that position is held, and its duties are performed, in a seemly fashion. Thus, it is the love of truth which seeks a holy leisure, while it is under the impetus of love that we should undertake righteous business. If this latter burden is not imposed on us, we should devote our freedom to the search for and contemplation of truth. But if it is imposed on us, it is to be undertaken because of the impetus of love; and even then the delight in the pursuit of truth should not be entirely forsaken. For if these pleasures were to be taken away from us, our burden might prove too great for us.

20 That the saints are blessed in hope during this life

The Supreme Good of the City of God, then, is eternal and perfect peace. This is not the peace which mortal men pass through on their journey from birth to death. Rather, it is that peace in which they rest in immortality and suffer adversity no more. Who can deny, therefore, that this is the supremely blessed life, or that the life which we now lead, no matter how filled with goods of soul and body and external circumstance, is most miserable in comparison? Nonetheless, if any man uses this life in such a way that he directs it towards that end which he so ardently loves and for which he so faithfully hopes, he may without absurdity be called happy even

⁴³ 1 Tim. 3,1.

⁴⁴ Cf. Augustine, *Enarrat. in Psalm.*, 126,3.

now, though rather by future hope than in present reality. Present reality without that hope, however, is a false happiness and a great misery, since, in that case, the true goods of the soul are not enjoyed. For no wisdom is true wisdom if it does not direct all its prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice towards that final state where God shall be all in all in an assured eternity and perfect peace.

21 Whether there ever was a Roman commonwealth answering to the definitions proposed by Scipio in Cicero's dialogue

I come now, then, to the place where, as I promised in the second book of this work,⁴⁵ I shall demonstrate that, according to the definitions proposed by Scipio in Cicero's book *De republica*, there never was a Roman commonwealth. I shall do this as briefly and as clearly as I can.

Scipio briefly defines a commonwealth as 'the property of a people'. If this is a true definition, however, there never was a Roman commonwealth, for the Roman state was never 'the property of a people' which the definition requires a commonwealth to be. Scipio defined a 'people' as a multitude 'united in fellowship by common agreement as to what is right and by a community of interest'. In the course of the discussion, he explains what he means by 'common agreement as to what is right', showing that a commonwealth cannot be maintained without justice. Where, therefore, there is no true justice there can be no right. For that which is done according to right is inevitably a just act, whereas nothing that is done unjustly can be done according to right. But the unjust institutions of men are neither to be called right nor supposed to be such; for even men themselves say that 'right' [*ius*] is that which flows from the fount of justice [*iustitia*]. As for the definition of justice commonly offered by certain persons who do not understand the matter rightly, that it is 'the interest of the stronger': this is false.⁴⁶

Where there is no true justice, then, there can be no association of men 'united in fellowship by common agreement as to what is

⁴⁵ Cf. Bk II, 21.

⁴⁶ Cf. Plato, *Rep.*, 339a ff.

right', and therefore no people according to the definition of Scipio or Cicero. And if there is no people then there is no 'property of a people', but only a multitude of some kind, not worthy of the name of a people. If, therefore, a commonwealth is 'the property of a people', and if there is no 'people' where there is no 'common agreement as to what is right', and if there is no right where there is no justice, then it follows beyond doubt that where there is no justice there is no commonwealth. Moreover, justice is that virtue which gives to each his due.⁴⁷ What kind of justice is it, then, that takes a man away from the true God and subjects him to impure demons? Is this giving to each his due? Or are we to call a man unjust if he takes a piece of property away from one who has bought it and hands it over to someone who has no right to it, yet just if he takes himself away from the lordship of the God who made him, and serves evil spirits?

In this same book, *De republica*, a most vigorous and forceful argument is developed on behalf of justice against injustice. Earlier in the discussion a case was made out in favour of injustice and against justice, and it was stated that a commonwealth cannot stand or be governed except by injustice. For it was proposed as a quite incontrovertible point here that it is unjust for some men to rule and others to serve; yet an imperial city to which a great commonwealth belongs cannot govern her provinces other than by means of such injustice. On the side of justice, it was urged in reply that this state of affairs is, in fact, just, because servitude may be to the advantage of such men as the provincials are, and is indeed so when rightly established: that is, when dishonest men are deprived of their freedom to do wrong. It was also urged that subjugated peoples will in any case be better off, because they were worse off when they were not subjugated. To strengthen this reasoning, there is added a notable example taken from nature. 'Why', it is asked, 'does God rule man, the soul the body, and the reason the desires and other vicious parts of the soul?' By this example it is shown plainly enough that servitude is beneficial for some men, and that servitude to God is indeed beneficial for all. For, when it serves God, the soul rules the body rightly; and, in the soul itself, when the reason is subject to God as its Lord, it rightly governs the

⁴⁷ Cf. Aristotle, *Nic. Eth.*, 5,5; Justinian, *Inst.*, 1,1; Augustine, *De lib. arb.*, 1,27,13.

desires and other such things. That being so, however, what justice can we suppose there to be in a man who does not serve God? For if the soul does not serve God it cannot by any means govern the body justly, nor can human reason govern the vices. And if there is no justice in such a man, then it is beyond doubt that there is no justice in a collection of men consisting of persons of this kind. Here, then, there is not that 'common agreement as to what is right' by which a multitude is made into a 'people' whose 'property' a commonwealth is said to be. And why need I say anything of that 'community of interest' which, according to our definition, makes a gathering of men into a 'people'? For if you attend diligently to the matter, you will see for yourself that nothing is 'in the interest' of those who live godlessly – of those, that is, who serve not God, but demons: demons whose impiety is all the greater in that they desire to have sacrifices offered to them as if they were gods rather than most unclean spirits. For my part, I consider that what I have already said concerning a 'common agreement as to what is right' is enough to make it apparent that, by this definition, there can be no 'people', and therefore no 'property' called a commonwealth, where there is no justice.

But perhaps our adversaries will say that the Romans did not serve unclean spirits in their commonwealth, but good and holy gods. Must we, then, repeat yet again those things which we have already said often enough, and more than often enough? Must not anyone who has perused the earlier books of this work down to this point be either exceedingly stupid or shamelessly contentious if he still doubts that the Romans served evil and impure demons? But, to say no more of the kind of gods whom the Romans worshipped with sacrifice, it is written in the Law of the true God, 'He that sacrificeth unto any god save unto the Lord only, shall be utterly destroyed.'⁴⁸ He Who uttered so great a threat does not desire that we should sacrifice either to good or bad gods.

22 Whether the God Whom Christians serve is the true God to Whom alone sacrifice is due

But the following reply is possible: 'Who is this God, and what proof is there that He is the only one Whom the Romans should

⁴⁸ Exod. 22,20.

have obeyed, and that they should have worshipped and sacrificed to no god save Him?' Anyone who is even now asking Who this God is must be very blind. He is the same God Whose prophets foretold the events that we now see accomplished. He is the God from Whom Abraham received the promise, 'In thy seed shall all nations be blessed.'⁴⁹ And this promise has been fulfilled in Christ, Who sprang from Abraham's seed according to the flesh. Even those who have remained hostile to the name of Christ acknowledge this, whether they wish to or not. He is the God Whose divine Spirit spoke through those whose prophecies I have cited in earlier books: prophecies which have been fulfilled in the Church which we now see spread throughout the whole world. He is the God Whom Varro, the most learned of the Romans, supposed to be Jupiter.⁵⁰ Varro did not understand what he was saying; but, nonetheless, I have considered it worthwhile to note the fact that a man of such great learning did not think this God to be non-existent or insignificant, but believed Him to be the same as the supreme god. Finally, He is the God whom Porphyry, the most learned of philosophers – though the bitterest enemy of the Christians – acknowledges to be a great god, even according to the oracles of those whom he supposes to be gods.

23 Porphyry's account of the answers given by the oracles of the gods concerning Christ

For in his book called *Philosophy from the Oracles*⁵¹ – a work in which he collects and comments on what he takes to be divine answers to philosophical questions – Porphyry speaks as follows (I give his own words, though translated into Latin from the Greek). 'To one who asked what god he should appease in order to recall his wife from Christianity, Apollo gave the following reply in verse.' Then come the following words, supposedly those of Apollo himself.

⁴⁹ Gen. 22,18.

⁵⁰ Cf. Augustine, *De consens. evang.*, 1,30,22.

⁵¹ Cf. Eusebius, *Praep. evang.*, 4,6,2; 4,8,3. The surviving fragments of this work have been edited by John O'Meara as *Porphyry's Philosophy from Oracles* (London, 1959).

You will, perhaps, be more able to write enduring letters on water, or open light wings and fly through the air like a bird, than bring your defiled and impious wife back to her senses. Let her continue as she likes, persevering in her vain delusions, singing lamentations for a god who died deluded himself: a god who was condemned by righteous judges and sentenced to die cruelly by the worst of deaths.

Then, after those verses of Apollo (although the Latin translation of them does not preserve the metrical form), Porphyry goes on: 'In these words, Apollo made clear the incorrigibility of the belief of the Christians, saying that the Jews are more ready to recognise God than the Christians are.' See how he denigrates Christ when he gives preference to the Jews over the Christians, saying that it is the Jews who defend God? For he expounds the verses of Apollo, where Apollo says that Christ was condemned to death by righteous judges, as if these verses meant that the judges were just in their judgment and that Christ deserved His punishment. But as to what this lying oracle of Apollo said, and Porphyry believed – an oracle which Porphyry perhaps invented himself: let us leave it aside. We shall see presently how consistent Porphyry is with himself, or, rather, how far he makes those oracles of his agree with one another.

Here, at any rate, he says that the Jews, as defenders of God, rightly gave judgment against Christ in pronouncing Him worthy to be tormented by the worst kind of death. Porphyry, therefore, bears witness to the God of the Jews; in which case, however, he ought to have listened to Him when He said, 'He that sacrificeth unto any god save unto the Lord only shall be utterly destroyed.' But let us come to still clearer matters, and hear how great Porphyry says the God of the Jews is. For example, when Apollo was asked whether word – that is, reason – is better than law, 'He replied with the following verses, saying' – and Porphyry then proceeds to quote the verses, from which I select the following as sufficient: 'In God, the Begetter and the King before all things, before Whom tremble heaven and earth and the sea and the hidden places of hell, and Whom the divine beings themselves dread; for their law is the Father whom the holy Hebrews greatly honour.'⁵² In this oracle of his god Apollo, Porphyry says that the God of the Hebrews is so

⁵² Cf. Lactantius, *De ira Dei*, 23,12.

great that even the divine beings dread Him. Since, therefore, that God has said, 'He that sacrificeth unto any god shall be utterly destroyed', I wonder at it that Porphyry himself was not afraid of being 'utterly destroyed' for sacrificing to other gods.

Despite that insult of his of which we have just spoken, however, this philosopher also has some good things to say of Christ. It is as if his gods spoke ill of Christ when asleep, yet acknowledged Him to be good, and gave Him due praise, when they awoke. For, as if he were intending to declare some wonderful and incredible thing, he says,

What we are about to say will certainly seem beyond belief to some. For the gods have declared that Christ was exceedingly pious, and that He has become an immortal, and that they speak well of His memory. But they also say that the Christians are defiled, contaminated and implicated in error. And many other such things do the gods say in accusation against the Christians.

He next proceeds to give examples of these accusations which the gods bring against the Christians; and he goes on: 'To certain persons who asked whether Christ was God, Hecate replied, 'You know that, when the immortal soul leaves the body, it always errs if it is cut off from wisdom. Christ's soul is that of a man of outstanding piety: this they worship because truth is a stranger to them.'⁵³ Then, after quoting this supposed oracle, he adds his comment:

Thus Hecate said that Christ was a most pious man, and that his soul, like those of other pious men, was granted immortality after death; and that Christians in their ignorance worship it. Moreover, to those who asked, 'Why, therefore, was Christ condemned?', the goddess gave the following oracular response: 'The body, indeed, is always liable to torments that undermine it; whereas the souls of the pious abide in a heavenly dwelling-place. But the soul of Christ has been a fatal gift to other souls, which were not destined to possess the gifts of the gods or to have knowledge of immortal Jupiter: a gift involving them in error. That is why the Christians are hated by the gods: because, not being fated to know God or to receive the gifts of the gods, they were fatally implicated in error by this man's gift. He himself, however, was pious; and, like other pious men,

⁵³ Cf. Eusebius, *Demonstratio evangelica*, 3,6.

passed into heaven. And so you should not speak ill of him, but, rather, pity the madness of men. From him comes for them a ready and imminent peril.'

Who, then, is so stupid as not to understand that these oracles were either the inventions of a devious man, a most determined enemy of the Christians, or the responses of impure demons, devised with similar intent? The intention of such demons here, clearly, is to lend credence to their vituperation of the Christians by first praising Christ, thereby, if possible, closing off the way of everlasting salvation whereby we become Christians. They clearly consider that it is not contrary to their astute and manifold efforts to do harm if they are believed when they praise Christ, provided that their vituperation of the Christians is also believed. For, then, if a man believes both, he may be an admirer of Christ without also wishing to become a Christian; and so Christ, though praised by him, will not deliver him from the dominion of those demons. Moreover, their praise of Christ is in any case such that whoever believes in the kind of Christ proclaimed by them becomes not a true Christian, but a heretic like Photinus: one who acknowledges Christ only as a man, not as God also.⁵⁴ Therefore, such a man cannot be saved by Him, and cannot avoid or unloose the snares of those lying demons.

For our part, we cannot approve either Apollo's vituperation of Christ or Hecate's praise of Him. For Apollo wishes it to be believed that Christ was sentenced to death by righteous judges, as a wicked man. Hecate, on the other hand, says that He was a most pious man, but only a man. In both cases, however, the intention is the same: to lead men to refuse to become Christians. For, unless they become Christians, they cannot be rescued from the power of the demons.

But our philosopher, or rather all those who believe such purported oracles against the Christians, must first, if they can, bring Hecate and Apollo into agreement regarding Christ, so that both may join together in either condemning or praising Him. Even if they were able to do this, however, we should none the less shun the testimony of false demons, whether they insult Christ or praise Him. But, as it happens, our adversaries' own god and goddess

⁵⁴ Cf. Augustine, *Confess.*, 8,19; *Serm.*, 192,3,3; 37,17,12; 183,8,5; *De haer.*, 44f.

disagree with one another, the one insulting Christ and the other praising Him. Surely, then, men who understand the matter rightly should not believe them when they blaspheme against the Christians.

Now when Porphyry (or Hecate) praises Christ, while adding that, in giving Himself to the Christians, He involved them fatally in error, he also at the same time reveals, as he supposes, the causes of this error. But before I expound these causes in his own words, I first ask: If Christ gave Himself as this fatal gift of involvement in error, did He do so wittingly or unwittingly? If wittingly, how can He be righteous? If unwittingly, how can He be blessed? But let us now hear the causes of this error. 'There are in a certain place', Porphyry says,

very small earthly spirits, subject to the power of evil demons. The wise men of the Hebrews (of whom this Jesus was one, as you have heard from the oracles of Apollo, of which we have already spoken) warned religious men against these evil demons and lesser spirits, and forbade them to give heed to them, teaching them rather to venerate the celestial gods and, above all, to worship God the Father. But the gods also teach this; and we have shown above how they admonish us to turn our minds to God, and everywhere command us worship Him. Uninstructed and impious natures, however, to which fate has not granted the gifts of the gods and the knowledge of immortal Jupiter, have not listened to the gods and to divinely inspired men; and so they have rejected all the gods, while, far from hating the forbidden demons, they revere them. Feigning to worship God, they fail to do those things by which alone God is adored. For God, indeed, Who is the Father of all, has no need of anything; but it is good for us to adore Him by means of justice, chastity, and the other virtues, and to make our whole life a prayer to Him by imitating Him and seeking to know Him. For seeking to know Him purges us, while imitation of Him deifies us by causing our disposition to resemble His.

Porphyry certainly spoke well in proclaiming God the Father and in telling of the conduct by which He is to be worshipped; and the prophetic books of the Hebrews are full of such precepts, whereby the life of holy men is enjoined upon us or praised. But Porphyry's errors or calumnies in speaking of the Christians are as great as

those demons whom he supposes to be gods could wish for. It is not, after all, difficult for anyone to recall the obscenities and indecencies which were acted out in the theatres at their behest, and to compare these things with what is read, spoken and heard in our churches, or what is offered to the true God. Thus, it is not difficult to understand, from this comparison, where morals are built up and where ruined. Who but a diabolic spirit could have told Porphyry, or inspired him to tell, such a vain and obvious lie as that the Christians revere, instead of hating, the demons whose worship was forbidden to the Hebrews? For that God Whom the wise men of the Hebrews worshipped forbids the offering of sacrifice even to the holy angels and powers of God: even to those angels and powers whom we venerate and love as our most blessed fellow citizens during this our mortal pilgrimage. For, in a voice of thunder, He utters this threat in His Law, which He gave to His Hebrew people, saying, 'He that sacrificeth unto any god shall be utterly destroyed.' Someone might suppose, however, that this prohibition applies only to the worst of the demons and to those earthly spirits which Porphyry says are very small or minor. For even these are called 'gods' in the Sacred Scriptures: gods of the Gentiles, that is, not of the Hebrews; and this is clear from the Septuagint translation of one of the psalms, where it says, 'For all the gods of the nations are demons.'⁵⁵ Someone might suppose, then, that, even though it is forbidden to sacrifice to these demons, it is permitted to offer sacrifice to all or some of the heavenly beings. And this is why the words 'save unto the Lord only' are added at once: that is 'save unto the Lord alone'. (I say this lest anyone should believe that 'unto the Lord only' [*Domino soli*] means that sacrifice is to be offered to 'our Lord the Sun' [*Dominum solem*]. That this is not what is meant can be seen very easily from the Greek version of the Scriptures.)

The God of the Hebrews, then, to whom this distinguished philosopher bears such testimony, gave to his Hebrew people the Law, written in the Hebrew language: a Law not obscure and unknown, but now spread abroad among all the nations. And in this Law it is written: 'He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the Lord only, shall be utterly destroyed.' What need is there to seek any further

⁵⁵ Psalm 96.5 (LXX).

proofs of this same thing, either in the Law or the prophets? There is, indeed, no need for any enquiry at all, for the proofs are neither difficult nor scarce. What need is there, then, to collect and insert into this discussion of mine proofs which are so plain and abundant: proofs by which it is made luminously clear that the true and supreme God has willed that sacrifice should be offered to no other being whatsoever, but to Himself alone? Behold one such proof, brief but magnificent, threatening, but certainly a true utterance of that God Whom the most learned of our adversaries so excellently proclaim. Let this warning be heard, feared, and obeyed, lest the disobedient be utterly destroyed in consequence. 'He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the Lord only', He says, 'shall be utterly destroyed'. This is not because God has need of anything, but because it is to our advantage to be His. For it is to Him that the psalmist sings, in the holy Scriptures of the Hebrews, 'I have said unto the Lord, Thou art my God, for Thou needest not my good.'⁵⁶

Yet it is we ourselves, His own City, who are His most wonderful and best sacrifice. And, as the faithful know, and as we have explained in previous books,⁵⁷ we celebrate the mystery of this sacrifice in our offerings. For it was proclaimed by divine oracles through the holy prophets that the sacrificial victims which the Jews offered as a foreshadowing of what was to come should cease, and that all nations, from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, were to offer one sacrifice;⁵⁸ and now we see that these things have come to pass. I have, however, already selected as many of these oracles as seemed sufficient, and distributed them throughout this work.

Thus, justice is found where the one supreme God rules an obedient City according to His grace, so that it sacrifices to none but Him; and where, in consequence, the soul rules the body in all men who belong to that City and obey God, and the reason faithfully rules the vices in lawful order. In that City, both the individual just man and the community and people of the just live by faith, which works by love:⁵⁹ by that love with which a man loves God as God ought to be loved, and his neighbour as himself. But where

⁵⁶ Psalm 16,2.

⁵⁷ Cf. esp. Bk x,5; 6; 20.

⁵⁸ Cf. Mal. 1,11.

⁵⁹ Cf. Gal. 5,6.

there is not this justice, there certainly is no association of men united by a common agreement as to what is right and by a community of interest. And so there is no commonwealth; for where there is no 'people', there is no 'property of a people'.

24 What is the definition which must be given of a 'people' and a 'commonwealth' in order to show that these titles may be claimed not only by the Roman but by other kingdoms also

But let us disregard this definition of a people and adopt another: let us say that a 'people' is an assembled multitude of rational creatures bound together by a common agreement as to the objects of their love. In this case, if we are to discover the character of any people, we have only to examine what it loves. If it is an assembled multitude, not of animals but of rational creatures, and is united by a common agreement as to what it loves, then it is not absurd to call it a 'people', no matter what the objects of its love may be. Clearly, however, the better the objects of this agreement, the better the people; and the worse the objects, the worse the people.

According to this definition of ours, the Roman people is indeed a people, and its 'property' is without doubt a commonwealth. As to the objects of that people's love – both in the earliest days and in the times which followed – and the morals of that people as it fell into bloody seditions and thence into social and civil wars, and so ruptured or corrupted that bond of concord which is, as it were, the health of a people: we have the testimony of history for all this, and I have presented many illustrations in the preceding books. I do not, however, on this account say that the Roman people was not really a people, or that Rome was not a commonwealth, so long as there remains an association of some kind between a multitude of rational creatures bound together by a common agreement as to the objects of their love. It must be understood, however, that what I have said of the Roman people and commonwealth I also say and think of the Athenians and any other Greeks, of the Egyptians, of the ancient Babylon of the Assyrians, and of every other nation, great or small, which has exercised its sway over commonwealths. For the city of the ungodly, considered generally, does not obey God's command that sacrifice should be offered to none save Him

alone. Thus, because the soul cannot in that case rightly and faithfully govern the body, nor the reason the vices, there can be no true justice in that city.

25 That where there is no true religion, there can be no true virtues

It may seem, indeed, that the soul governs the body and the reason the vices in a most praiseworthy fashion; yet, if soul and reason do not themselves serve God as God Himself has taught us that He should be served, they do not in any way govern the body and the vices righteously. For what kind of mistress of the body and the vices can the mind be if it does not know the true God and is not subject to His rule, but is instead prostituted to the corrupting influence of most vicious demons? Thus, the virtues which the mind seems to possess, and by which it governs the body and the vices so that it may obtain and keep whatever it desires, are really themselves vices, and not virtues at all, if they do not have reference to God. Some, indeed, suppose that the virtues are true and honourable even when they have reference only to themselves and are sought for no other end. Then, however, they are puffed up and proud, and so are to be adjudged vices rather than virtues. For just as that which gives life to the flesh is not something derived from the flesh, but something above it, so that which makes the life of man blessed is not something derived from him, but something above him. And this is true not only of man but of every heavenly power and virtue whatsoever.

26 Of the peace which is enjoyed by people who are estranged from God, and the use made of it by the people of God during the time of their pilgrimage

Thus, just as the soul is the life of the flesh, so God is the blessedness of man's life. As the Holy Scriptures of the Hebrews say, 'Blessed is the people whose God is the Lord.'⁶⁰ A people estranged from God, therefore, must be wretched; yet even such a people as

⁶⁰ Psalm 144, 15.

this loves a peace of its own, which is not to be despised. It will not, indeed, possess it in the end, because it does not make good use of it before the end. For the time being, however, it is advantageous to us also that this people should have such peace in this life; for, while the two cities are intermingled, we also make use of the peace of Babylon. We do so even though the people of God is delivered from Babylon by faith, so that it is only for a while that we are pilgrims in her midst. It is for this reason, therefore, that the apostle admonishes the Church to pray for kings and for all that are in authority, adding these words: 'that we may live a quiet and tranquil life in all godliness and love'.⁶¹ Again, when the prophet Jeremiah foretold the captivity which was to befall the ancient People of God, he bade them, by divine command, to go obediently into Babylon, thereby serving God even by their patient endurance; and he himself admonished them to pray for Babylon, saying 'In the peace thereof shall ye have peace'.⁶² the temporal peace which is for the time being shared by the good and the wicked alike.

27 That the peace of God's servants cannot be apprehended in its perfection during this mortal life

That peace which is our peculiar possession, however, is ours even now, with God by faith; and we shall enjoy it eternally with Him by sight.⁶³ But the peace which we have here, whether shared with other men or peculiar to ourselves, is only a solace for our wretchedness rather than the joy of blessedness. Our righteousness also, though true righteousness insofar as it is directed towards a good end, is in this life such that it consists only in the remission of sin rather than in the perfection of virtue. This is borne out by the prayer of the whole City of God during its pilgrimage on earth; for it cries out to God with the voice of all its members: 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.'⁶⁴ But this prayer has efficacy not for those whose faith is 'without works and dead',⁶⁵ but only for those whose faith 'worketh by love'.⁶⁶

⁶¹ 1 Tim. 2,2.

⁶² Jer. 29,7.

⁶³ Cf. 2 Cor. 5,7.

⁶⁴ Matt. 6,12.

⁶⁵ James 2,17.

⁶⁶ Gal. 5,6.

Righteous men have need of such a prayer because their reason, even though subject to God, does not exercise perfect control over the vices in this mortal state, where it is pressed down by the corruptible body. For, though it governs the vices, the vices do not allow themselves to be governed without resistance. No matter how well a man maintains the conflict, then, and no matter how completely he masters such enemies by overcoming and subduing them, some evil thing may still creep in: something which, even if it does not readily take the form of a deed, nonetheless finds expression through the lips, or insinuates itself into the thought.

Thus, peace in the full sense does not exist for as long as it is necessary to govern the vices. For the battle is full of peril while those vices which resist are being overcome; and even when some of them are conquered, the result is not a secure triumph, but only a rule full of anxiety and effort. We dwell, therefore, in the midst of temptations, of which it has been succinctly said in the divine eloquence, 'Is not human life upon earth a temptation?'⁶⁷ Who can presume that he is living in such a way that he has no need to say to God, 'Forgive us our trespasses'? No one but an arrogant man would think such a thing: not a truly great man, but one puffed up and swollen with pride, who is with justice resisted by Him who bestows grace upon the humble. For this reason, it is written: 'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.'⁶⁸

In this life, therefore, justice is present in each man when he obeys God, when the mind rules the body, and when the reason governs the vices which oppose it, by subduing or resisting them. Also, it is present when man begs God for the grace to do meritorious deeds, and for pardon for his offences, and when he duly gives thanks to Him for all the blessings he receives. In that final peace, however, to which this justice should be referred, and for the attainment of which it is to be maintained, our nature will be healed by immortality and incorruption. Then, it will have no vices, and nothing at all, in ourselves or any other, will be in conflict with any one of us. Thus, there will be no need for reason to govern the vices, because there will be no vices. Rather, God will rule man, and the soul will rule the body; and the delight and effortlessness

⁶⁷ Job 1,7 (LXX)

⁶⁸ James 4,6; 1 Pet. 5,5.

with which we obey in that final peace will be as great as our happiness in living and reigning. There, for each and every man, this condition will be eternal, and its eternity will be assured; and so the peace of this blessedness, or the blessedness of this peace, will be the Supreme Good.

28 The end of the wicked

By contrast, however, the lot of those who do not belong to the City of God will be everlasting misery. This misery is also called the second death, for the soul cannot be said to be alive when it is in that condition: when it is separated from the life of God; nor can the body be said to be alive when it is subjected to eternal pain. And so this second death will be all the harder to bear, because there will be no other death to bring it to an end.

But just as misery is the opposite of happiness, and death of life, so it seems that the opposite of peace is war. And so it may fairly be asked: If the final state of the good is proclaimed and praised as being one of peace, how, or in what sense, is the final state of the wicked to be understood as being one of war? Anyone who asks this question, then, should pay attention to what it is that is so harmful and destructive in war; and he will see that it is nothing other than the mutual opposition and conflict of things. What war, then, can be imagined more grievous and bitter than one in which the will is so much at odds with the passions, and the passions with the will, that their hostility cannot be ended by the victory of either: a war such that the force of pain is in such conflict with the body's nature that neither can yield to the other? For in this life, when such conflict takes place, either pain conquers, and death takes away feeling, or nature conquers, and health abolishes pain. But in the life to come, pain continues always, in order to torment, while nature remains in order to feel the pain. Neither ceases to exist, lest punishment also should cease. These, then, are the final states of good and evil, the first to be longed for and the second shunned. And since it is through a judgment that the good will pass to the one, and the evil to the other, it is of this judgment that I shall deal, as far as God grants, in following book.

Book xx

1 God is always judging; but it is reasonable to confine our attention in this book to His last judgment

As far as He will grant me power to do so, I shall now speak of the day of God's final judgment and affirm it against the ungodly and the unbelieving. I must begin by laying down, as the foundation of the building, as it were, the evidence of Divine Scripture. Those who do not wish to believe such evidence endeavour to overturn it by means of a false and fallacious process of human hair-splitting. They either contend that what is put forward as evidence from the Holy Scriptures has some other meaning, or they simply deny that it is divinely inspired. But I believe that no mortal man who understands these statements as they were uttered and believes that they were spoken by the supreme and true God through the agency of holy souls will fail to yield and consent to them, whether he openly acknowledges this or not; although it may be, of course, that he is ashamed or afraid to do so because of some fault. It may even be, indeed, that, with a perversity closely allied to madness, he strives with all his might to defend what he knows or believes to be false against what he knows or believes to be true.

The whole Church of the true God, then, holds and professes the belief that Christ will come down from heaven to judge the living and the dead. This is what we call the last day, the day of the divine judgment: that is, the last time; for it is not certain how many days this judgment will take. But no one who reads the Sacred Scriptures, however negligently, does not know that the word 'day' is often used in them to mean 'time'.¹ Also, when we speak of the day of God's judgment, we add the word 'last' or 'final'; for God is judging even now. He has been judging from the beginning of the human race, when He expelled the first human beings from Paradise and cut them off from the tree of life as perpetrators of a great sin. Indeed, He undoubtedly gave judgment even before that, when He did not spare the

¹ Cf. Augustine, *De gen. contra Man.*, 2,4,3.

angels who sinned,² whose prince, himself seduced, seduced man in his envy. Also, it is by nothing else than the deep and just judgment of God that the life of the demons in the air, or in the sky, and the life of men on earth, is most miserable, and so full of errors and fears. Moreover, even if no one had sinned, the whole rational creation could not have been maintained in eternal blessedness by persevering in its adherence to the Lord without His good and righteous judgment.

Again, not only does He pass judgment universally on the whole race of demons and men, condemning them to misery as the deserved punishment of their first sins; also, He judges the personal acts of individuals performed by the free choice of their will. For even the demons beseech that they may not be tormented;³ and it is certainly not without justice that they are spared or tormented according to the degree of wickedness exhibited by each. Men also are punished by God for what they do, often openly, always secretly, either in this life or after death; although no man acts rightly unless he is sustained by divine aid, and no demon or man acts wickedly unless permitted to do so by the same divine and most just judgment. For, as the apostle says, 'There is no unrighteousness with God';⁴ and, as he says elsewhere, 'His judgments are inscrutable, and His ways past finding out.'⁵

In this book, then, I shall speak, as far as God permits, not of those first judgments, nor of the intervening judgments of God, but of the last judgment itself, when Christ will come from heaven to judge the living and the dead. For that day is properly called the Day of Judgment because, when it comes, there will no longer be occasion for the ignorant to ask why this unjust man is happy and that just man unhappy. It will then become clear that true and full happiness belongs to none but the good, while all the wicked, and only the wicked, are to suffer deserved and supreme unhappiness.

² Cf. 1 Pet. 2,4.

³ Cf. Matt. 8,29.

⁴ Rom. 9,4.

⁵ Rom. 11,33.

2 That in the tangled web of human affairs, God's judgment is present even when it cannot be discerned

For the time being, however, we are learning to bear with equanimity the ills that even good men suffer. At the same time, we are learning not to attach too much importance to those good things which the wicked also acquire. In this way, divine doctrine conduces to our salvation even in circumstances where divine justice is not apparent. For we do not know by what judgment of God this good man is poor, while that wicked man is rich. We do not know why this man is joyful even though, as we judge the matter, his abandoned morals render him worthy to be tormented with grief. We do not know why that man, whose praiseworthy life persuades us that he ought to be joyful, is nonetheless sad. We do not know why an innocent man can leave the court not only unvindicated, but actually condemned, either oppressed by the injustice of the judge or overwhelmed by false evidence. We do not know why, by contrast, his wicked adversary reviles him as he goes his way not only unpunished but even vindicated. We do not know why the ungodly man lives in the best of health, while the pious man wastes away in sickness. We do not know why young men who are robbers enjoy excellent health, while infants who could not hurt anyone, even with a word, are afflicted by all manner of dreadful diseases. We do not know why one who plays a beneficial part in human affairs is snatched away by premature death, whereas one who, as it seems to us, ought never to have been born at all lives on long beyond the normal span. We do not know why one whose life is full of crimes is crowned with honours, whereas the man who is without reproach lies buried in the darkness of unrecognition. Who could collect or enumerate all the other examples of this kind?

It would be easier if such cases displayed some consistency even in their absurdity, as it were. It would be easier, that is, if, in this life, in which, as the sacred psalm says, 'Man is like to vanity, his days as a shadow that passeth away',⁶ only the wicked obtained the transitory goods of this earth, and only the good suffered its ills. This state of things could, after all, be ascribed to the just – indeed,

⁶ Psalm 144,4.

the benign – judgment of God. We might then suppose that those who were not to attain the eternal goods which make men happy were being either deluded by temporal goods as a punishment for their malice, or else, by God's mercy, consoled by them. By the same token, we might suppose that those who were not to suffer eternal torments hereafter were either being afflicted by temporal ills as a penalty for whatever sins, however small, they had committed, or trained by them to bring their virtue to its fullness. As it is, however, there are good men who suffer evils and evil men who enjoy good things, which seems unjust; and there are bad men who come to a bad end, and good men who arrive at a good one. Thus, the judgments of God are all the more inscrutable, and His ways past finding out.

We do not know, therefore, by what judgment God causes or allows these things to come to pass; for in Him there is the highest power, the highest wisdom and the highest justice, and in Him there is no infirmity, no rashness, and no injustice. For all that, it is salutary for us to learn not to attach great value to those things which, whether good or evil, we see to be common to good and evil men alike; but to seek instead those good things which belong only to good men, and especially to shun those evils which belong only to evil men. However, when we arrive at that judgment of God, the time of which is in a special sense called the Day of Judgment, and sometimes the Day of the Lord, it will become apparent that God's judgments are entirely just: not only all the judgments that will be given then, but also all the judgments given from the beginning, and all those which are to be given hereafter until that time. In that day too, it will be made manifest by what just judgment of God it comes about that at this present time so many – indeed, almost all – of the just judgments of God are hidden from the senses and minds of mortals. However, in this matter one thing is not hidden from the faith of the godly; and that is, that what is hidden is nonetheless just.

3 What Solomon, in the Book of Ecclesiastes, says of those things which happen to good and bad men alike

Solomon, the wisest king of Israel, who reigned in Jerusalem, begins his book called 'Ecclesiastes' – a book which is included by the Jews

in their canon of Scripture – in the following way: ‘Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?’⁷ It is to this pronouncement that he appends the rest of what he has to say. First, he enumerates the calamities and errors of this life, and the evanescent character of the present time, in which there is nothing solid, and nothing which remains stable. Then, among the other vanities that there are under the sun, he especially deplores the fact that, though ‘wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness’, and ‘the wise man’s eyes are in his head, but the fool walketh in darkness’, yet ‘one event happeneth to them all’. By this ‘one event’ he means, of course, this life passed ‘under the sun’: he refers, that is, to those evils which, as we see, are common to good and bad men alike. He also says that good men suffer evils, as if they themselves were evil, and that evil men acquire good things, as if they themselves were good. He says, ‘There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be just men unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked. Again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity.’⁸

This wisest of men devoted the whole of his book to an adequate description of this vanity. His motive in doing so, clearly, was that we should desire not a life of vanity under the sun, but a life of verity under the sun’s Creator. Now, in this state of vanity, is it anything but the just and righteous judgment of God that man, having become like this vanity, should himself vanish away? However, in the days of his vanity what matters most is whether a man resists the truth or yields to it, and whether he has no part in true godliness or participates in it. And this is important, not for the sake of acquiring the good things of this life, or for the avoidance of evils that vanish and pass away, but for the sake of the future judgment, when the good will receive good things and the wicked will receive evil things which will endure for ever. The wise king concludes his book, then, as follows: ‘Fear God’, he says, ‘and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring into judgment every work, whether it be good or

⁷ Eccles. 1,2f; cf. Augustine, *Retract.*, 1,73.

⁸ Eccles. 8,14.

whether it be evil, with every despised person.⁹ Could he have said anything more succinct, more true and more wholesome than this? 'Fear God', he says, 'and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man'. Indeed, anyone who exists at all is a keeper of God's commandments; for anyone who is not this is nothing: he is not remade in the image of truth; rather, he remains in the likeness of vanity. 'For God shall bring into judgment every work' – that is, whatever a man does in this life – 'whether it be good or whether it be evil, with every despised person' – that is, with every man who here seems to be contemptible, and is therefore not considered. For God sees even him, and does not disregard him, nor pass him over when He gives judgment.

4 That proofs of the last judgment are to be adduced, first from the New Testament, then from the Old

I propose now, then, to produce proofs of this last judgment of God from Holy Scripture; and these are to be chosen first from the books of the New Testament, and then from the Old. For although the Old Testament is prior in time, the New Testament is to be placed before the Old in terms of dignity, because the Old Testament is the herald of the New. The New Testament evidence will be cited first, therefore, and we shall then confirm this by means of proofs derived from the Old. In the Old Testament we have the Law and the Prophets, while in the New we have the Gospel and the epistles of the apostles. Now the apostle says, 'By the Law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the Law is manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ upon all them that believe.'¹⁰ This righteousness of God belongs to the New Testament, and the books of the Old, that is, the Law and the Prophets, bear witness to it. I must, then, state the case first, and call the witnesses afterwards. That this is the order to be observed is shown us by Jesus Christ Himself, when He says, 'The scribe instructed in the kingdom of God is like a good householder, bring-

⁹ Eccles. 12,13f.

¹⁰ Rom. 3,20ff.

ing out of his treasure things new and old.’¹¹ He did not say ‘things old and new’, which He surely would have said had He not preferred to observe the order of merit rather than the order of time.

5 The passages in which Our Lord and Saviour declares that there is to be a divine judgment at the end of the world

Thus, in rebuking the cities which had not believed in Him even though He had done great works of power in them, the Saviour Himself compares them with alien cities and says, ‘But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you.’¹² And a little later he says to another city, ‘Verily, I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee.’¹³ Here, then He is most clearly predicting that a day of judgment is to come. And He says in another place:

The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the words of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.¹⁴

In this passage we learn two things: that there is a judgment to come; and that with it will come the resurrection of the dead. For when the Lord spoke thus of the men of Nineveh and the queen of the south, He was without doubt speaking of people who are now dead; yet He said that they would ‘rise up’ on the day of judgment. And when He said ‘They shall condemn’, He said this not because they themselves would pass judgment, but because, in comparison with them, the others shall be justly condemned.

Again, in another place, when speaking of the present mingling of good men and bad, and of their future separation – which will,

¹¹ Matt. 13,52.

¹² Matt. 11,22.

¹³ Matt. 11,24.

¹⁴ Matt. 12,41f.

of course, happen on the day of judgment – Christ made use of the parable of the sown wheat and the tares sown later. This He explains to His disciples as follows:

He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one. The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.¹⁵

Here, indeed, Christ did not use the expression 'judgment', or 'day of judgment'; but He indicated it all the more clearly by describing its details, and He foretold that it would happen at the end of the world.

In like manner, He said to His disciples, 'Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'¹⁶ Here we learn that Jesus will judge with his disciples. And therefore He says to the Jews, in another place, 'If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges.'¹⁷

When He says that they are to sit upon twelve thrones, however, we are not to suppose from this that only twelve men will judge with Him. Rather, the number twelve signifies the universal character of the multitude of those who are to judge. For the numbers three and four are parts of seven, which is commonly used as a symbol of universality; and three and four, multiplied together, give twelve, for three fours are twelve, and so are four threes. And it

¹⁵ Matt. 13,37ff.

¹⁶ Matt. 19,28.

¹⁷ Matt. 12,27.

may be that other explanations of the number twelve are to be found which yield the same meaning.¹⁸ Otherwise, since we read that Matthias was ordained an apostle in the place of the traitor Judas,¹⁹ there would be no throne of judgment for the apostle Paul, who 'laboured more abundantly'²⁰ than them all. Yet Paul clearly shows that he belongs to the number of the judges, along with the other saints, when he says, 'Know ye not that we shall judge angels?'²¹

Similar remarks apply when the number twelve is used with reference to those who are to be judged. For 'judging the twelve tribes of Israel' does not mean that the tribe of Levi, which is a thirteenth tribe, is not to be judged by them. Nor does it mean that only the people of Israel are to be judged and not the rest of the nations also. And when Christ says, 'in the regeneration', there is no doubt that he wishes us to understand the term 'regeneration' to mean the resurrection of the dead. For our flesh will be regenerated by incorruption, just as our soul is regenerated by faith.

I pass over many other passages which seem to refer to the last judgment but which, on more careful consideration, are found to be ambiguous, or to refer more pertinently to something else. They may refer, for example, to the 'coming' of the Saviour which is going on throughout this present age in His Church: that is, in His members. In this sense, He comes part by part and little by little, since the whole Church is His body. Again, the reference may be to the destruction of the earthly Jerusalem. For when Christ speaks of that destruction He often does so as if He were speaking of the end of the world and of the last and great day of judgment. Thus, these two events cannot possibly be distinguished except by comparing all the similar passages on the subject which occur in the three evangelists Matthew, Mark and Luke. For one evangelist expresses himself more obscurely in certain respects, whereas another does so more plainly; and so one evangelist can be used to make the meaning of another plain where statements referring to the same event occur in each. I have been at some pains to do this in a certain letter which I wrote to Hesychius, a man of blessed

¹⁸ Cf. Augustine, *Enarrat. in Psalm.*, 49,9.

¹⁹ Cf. Acts 1,25f.

²⁰ 1 Cor 15,10.

²¹ 1 Cor. 6,3.

memory, bishop of the city of Salona: a letter entitled *De fine saeculi*.²²

Next, then, I shall cite from the Gospel according to St Matthew that passage which speaks of the separation of the good from the wicked by the most efficacious and final judgment of Christ. 'When the Son of man', He says,

shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory. And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, and fed Thee? Or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? Or naked, and clothed Thee? Or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall He say also unto them on His left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.²³

Then, in the same vein, He enumerates the things which the wicked have not done: the things which He had said that those on His right hand had done. And when they ask Him the same question – when did they see Him in need of these things? – He replies that, inasmuch as they had not done it to the least of His brethren, they had not done it to Him. And He concludes His discourse thus: 'And these shall go away', He says, 'into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal'.²⁴

Again, the evangelist John tells us most clearly how Jesus foretold that the judgment should take place at the resurrection of the dead.

²² *Epist.* 199.

²³ *Matt.* 25,34ff.

²⁴ *Matt.* 25,46.

For He said, first, 'The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father: he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him.' He then immediately added, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death to life.'²⁵ Behold: He said that the faithful 'shall not come into judgment'. How, then, will they be separated from the wicked by judgment and stand on His right hand, unless He here uses the word 'judgment' to mean 'condemnation'? It is to 'judgment' in this sense of 'condemnation' that they will not come who hear His word and believe on Him that sent Him.

6 Of the first resurrection, and the second

Next, Jesus goes on to say, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself.'²⁶ He is not yet speaking of the second resurrection, that is, the resurrection of the body, which is to come at the end,²⁷ but of the first, which is now. It is, indeed, in order to make this distinction that He says, 'The hour is coming, and now is.' This first resurrection, however, is not the resurrection of the body, but of the soul. For souls also have their own death, consisting in ungodliness and sin; and this is the death suffered by those of whom the Lord speaks when He says, 'Let the dead bury their dead':²⁸ that is, let those who are dead in soul bury those who are dead in body.²⁹ Thus, He is speaking of those who are dead in soul by reason of their ungodliness and iniquity when He says, 'The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.' By 'they that hear' He means those who obey and believe, and who persevere even to the end. And He does not

²⁵ John 5,22ff.

²⁶ John 5,25f.

²⁷ Cf. Augustine, *De Trin.*, 4,5,3; Eph. 2,1; 5; 1 Tim. 5,6.

²⁸ Matt. 8,22.

²⁹ Cf. Augustine, *Serm.*, 100,2.

here make any distinction between the good and the wicked. For it is good for all men to hear His voice, and to come to life by passing over to the life of godliness from the death of ungodliness. It is of this death that the apostle Paul speaks when he says, 'Therefore all are dead, and He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him Which died for them and rose again.'³⁰

All men are dead in sin, then, and no one at all is exempt: whether in original sin or intentional sin added to it, committed either in ignorance or by failing to do what is known to be right. And for all the dead, there died the one Man Who was truly alive: the one Man, that is, Who was entirely without sin. He died so that those who are brought to life through the remission of their sins should henceforth live not for themselves, but for Him: for Him Who died for all, for our sins, and rose again for our justification.³¹ He died so that we, believing in Him Who justifies the ungodly,³² and being justified from ungodliness by Him and raised from the dead, might be able to share in the first resurrection that 'now is'. For only those take part in this first resurrection who are also to be blessed for all eternity. In the second, however, of which Jesus will shortly speak, He will teach us that the blessed and the wretched alike take part. The first resurrection is the resurrection of mercy; but the second is the resurrection of judgment. For this reason, it is written in the psalm, 'I will sing of mercy and of judgment: unto Thee, O Lord, will I sing.'³³

Jesus now proceeds to speak of this judgment, saying: 'And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man'. Here, He shows us that He will come to judge in that flesh in which He had come to be judged. It is for this reason that He says, 'because He is the Son of man'. Then, He adds the words with which we are here concerned: 'Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrec-

³⁰ 2 Cor. 5,14f.

³¹ Cf. Rom. 4,25.

³² Cf. Rom. 4,5.

³³ Psalm 102,1.

tion of judgment.'³⁴ He uses the word 'judgment' here in the same sense as He used it a little while before, to mean 'condemnation', when He said, 'He that heareth my word and believeth not on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death to life.' In other words, by having a part in the first resurrection, by which the passage from death to life is effected in this present time, he will not come into condemnation, which Jesus calls by the name of 'judgment', just as He does also in this other place, where He says, 'but they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment', that is, of condemnation. Thus, he who does not wish to be condemned in the second resurrection must rise in the first. For 'the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live', that is, they will not come into condemnation, the 'second death', as it is called. But after the second resurrection which is to come, the resurrection of the body, those who do not rise up in the first resurrection, the resurrection of souls, will be hurled into this death. 'For the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth.' Here, He does not say that the hour 'now is', because it is to come at the end of the world: that is, at the last and greatest judgment of God. Also, He does not say, as in the first resurrection, 'and they that hear shall live'. For all shall not live. What this means, however, is that not all will have that life which, because it is a life of blessedness, is the only life worthy to be so called. For, clearly, if they were without any kind of life at all, they would not be able to hear and come forth in their rising bodies.

And, in the words that follow, Christ teaches us why all shall not live. 'They that have done good', He says, 'unto the resurrection of life': these, then, are they who shall live. 'And they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment': these are they who shall not live, for they shall die the second death. They have done evil because their life has been evil. And their life has been evil either because they did not rise to new life in the first resurrection, the resurrection of souls which now is, or because, having so risen, they did not persevere in that new life to the end. Thus, there are two

³⁴ John 5,27ff.

regenerations, of which I have already spoken above. The one is according to faith, which 'now is' through baptism, and the other according to the flesh, which will come when the body is made incorruptible and immortal at the great and last judgment. So too, there are two resurrections. The first, which 'now is', is the resurrection of the soul, which is here and now, and prevents us from coming to the second death; and the second, which is not yet, is that which is to come at the end of the world. This second resurrection is not of the soul but of the body; and, at the last judgment, it will send many to the second death, and bring others to the life in which there is no death.

7 What is written in the Revelation of John
regarding the two resurrections and the millennium,
and what we may reasonably take these things to
mean

John the evangelist also spoke of these two resurrections in the book called Revelation. But he spoke in such a way that some of our people do not understand the first resurrection; which has, moreover, been perverted into ridiculous fables. This, then, is what the apostle John says in the book which I have just named:

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them. And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be

priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.³⁵

Now some have supposed, on the strength of this passage, that the first resurrection is to be a future and bodily one. Among other things, they have been particularly struck by the number of a thousand years, as if it were an appropriate thing for the saints to enjoy a kind of Sabbath during that time. They envisage a holy rest, as it were, after the labours of six thousand years. For it is that long since man was created and, in retribution for his great sin, expelled from the felicity of Paradise into the woes of this mortal state. Also, it is written that 'One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.'³⁶ Thus, they consider that, at the end of six thousand years, as of six days, the final thousand years should follow as a kind of seventh or Sabbath day, and that it is for this purpose that the saints rise: that is, to celebrate this Sabbath.

This opinion would be tolerable enough if it involved the belief that the joys of the saints in that Sabbath are to be spiritual ones, arising from the presence of the Lord. Indeed, I myself once held this opinion.³⁷ But there are some who assert that those who are to rise again then will spend their rest at immoderate carnal feasts. These feasts are to be provided with quantities of food and drink which not only do not remain within the limits of moderation, but which also surpass belief itself. But such beliefs can only be held by carnal people. Spiritual men use the Greek word 'Chiliasts' to describe those who believe such things; a term which we can translate by the corresponding word 'Millenarians'.³⁸ It would take too long to refute them point by point, however. We ought instead to show how this scriptural passage is to be taken.

Now the Lord Jesus Christ himself says, 'No man can enter into a strong man's house, and take his property, except he first bind the strong man.'³⁹ By the 'strong man' we are to understand the devil, because he had power to take the human race captive. The 'property' that Christ was to take represents those whom the devil had held in his possession through various sins and iniquities, but

³⁵ Rev. 20, 1ff.

³⁶ 2 Pet. 3, 8.

³⁷ Cf. *Serm.*, 259, 2.

³⁸ Cf. Augustine, *De haer.*, 8; Jerome, *Comm. in Isa.*, 18, 769.

³⁹ Matt. 12, 29.

who were to become Christ's faithful people. It was to bind this 'strong man', then, that the angel, in the apostle's vision in the Revelation, was to 'come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold', he says, 'on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years': that is, he restrained and bridled his power, so that he should not seduce and gain possession of those who were to be redeemed.

Now the thousand years, as it seems to me, can be understood in two ways. First, it may mean that these things are coming to pass now, in the final thousand years: that is, in the sixth millennium, which is, as it were, the sixth day. The last hours of this day are now passing, and it is to be followed by the Sabbath which has no evening: that is, by the rest of the saints, which has no end. Thus, using that figure of speech whereby a part is signified by the whole, John uses the expression 'a thousand years' to denote the last part of this millennium – or 'day' – which remains before the end of the world. Alternatively, he may have intended the thousand years to represent the whole number of years during which this world has been in existence, signifying the fullness of time by a perfect number. For the number one thousand is the cube of ten: ten times ten is a hundred, that is, a square but plane figure; but to give this figure height and make it a solid, the hundred is again multiplied by ten, which is one thousand. Moreover, one hundred is sometimes used to stand for totality, as when the Lord promised anyone who left all his goods and followed Him that he would 'receive in this world an hundredfold'.⁴⁰ The apostle gives somewhat of an explanation of this when he says. 'As having nothing, yet possessing all things';⁴¹ for it was said of old that 'The whole world is the wealth of the faithful man.'⁴² If this is so, then, does not a thousand, which is the square of ten made into a solid figure, represent totality still more completely? Hence, when we read in the psalm, 'He hath been mindful of His covenant for ever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations',⁴³ there is no better way of interpreting this than by understanding it to mean 'to all generations'.

⁴⁰ Matt. 19,29.

⁴¹ 2 Cor. 6,10.

⁴² Prov. 17,6 (LXX); cf. Augustine, *Epist.* 153,26; Jerome, *Epist.* 53,10.

⁴³ Psalm 105,8.

‘And he cast him into the bottomless pit’; that is, he cast the devil into the bottomless pit. Here, the bottomless pit signifies the innumerable multitude of the ungodly, in whose hearts there is a bottomless malignity directed against the Church of God. Not that the devil was not in them before; but he is said to be cast in thither because, when he is excluded from doing harm to believers, he begins to take possession of the ungodly all the more completely. For that man is all the more completely possessed by the devil who is not only estranged from God, but also gratuitously hates those who are God’s servants. ‘And shut him up’, John says, ‘and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled’. ‘Shut him up’ means that the angel prevented the devil from going out and transgressing God’s commandments. And the addition of the words ‘and set a seal on him’ seems to me to indicate that God wished it to be kept a secret who belongs to the devil’s faction and who does not. In this world, this is indeed kept a secret; for it is uncertain whether he who now seems to stand firm will fall, and whether he who now seems to lie fallen will rise.

Because he is thus bound and shut up, then, the devil is prohibited and prevented from seducing those nations which belonged to Christ: the nations whom he formerly seduced or held in bondage. For God chose those nations before the foundation of the world, to deliver them from the power of darkness and to translate them into the kingdom of His dear Son, as the apostle says.⁴⁴ For who among the faithful does not know that the devil even now seduces nations and draws them with himself into eternal punishment? Not those nations predestined to eternal life, however. Let no one be troubled by the fact that the devil often seduces even those who have already been regenerated in Christ and are walking in the ways of God. For ‘the Lord knoweth them that are His’,⁴⁵ and the devil seduces none of these into eternal damnation. For it is as God that the Lord knows them, not as a man. From God nothing is hidden: not even any of those things which are yet to be. A man, however, sees a man only as he is at this present time – if, indeed, he can be said to see one whose heart he does not see. He

⁴⁴ Cf. Eph. 1,4.

⁴⁵ 2 Tim. 2,19.

does not see even himself clearly enough to know what kind of person he will be in the future. This, then, is the purpose for which the devil is bound and shut up in the bottomless pit: so that he may no longer seduce the nations of which the Church is composed: the nations whom he seduced and held in bondage before they were a Church. For it is not said 'that he should not deceive any man', but 'that he should deceive the nations no more' – meaning, no doubt, those nations among whom the Church is established – 'till the thousand years should be fulfilled': that is, either what remains of the sixth day (which consists of a thousand years), or all the years which are still to come before the end of the world.

But these words – 'that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled' – are not to be taken as meaning that he will afterwards deceive only those nations of which the predestined Church is composed: the nations which he had previously been prevented from seducing by the fact that he was bound and shut up in the bottomless pit. Rather, the manner of speaking here employed is the same as that employed elsewhere in Scripture; as in the psalm, for example: 'So our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until He have mercy upon us'⁴⁶ – which does not mean that when God has shown mercy the eyes of His servants will cease to be fixed on Him. Alternatively, the proper order of the words is this: 'And he shut him up and set a seal upon him, till the thousand years should be fulfilled'; and the intervening clause, 'that he should deceive the nations no more', is to be understood not according to its place in the sentence, but separately, as if it were added at the end. Thus, the whole sentence would read as follows: 'And he shut him up and set a seal upon him till the thousand years should be fulfilled, that he should deceive the nations no more': that is, he is shut up till the thousand years should be fulfilled so that he may not deceive the nations any more.

8 Of the binding and releasing of the devil

'And after that', St John says, 'he must be loosed a little season'. Now if the binding and shutting up of the devil means that he cannot deceive the Church, must his loosing therefore mean that he

⁴⁶ Psalm 123,2.

will be able to do so again? God forbid! For he will never deceive that Church which was predestined and chosen before the foundation of the world, of which it is said that 'the Lord knoweth them that are His'. Yet there will be a Church in this world even at that time, when the devil is to be loosed, just as there has been since the beginning and will be in all times to come, as the dying are replaced by the newly born. A little after this, indeed, John says that when the devil has been loosed he will deceive the nations throughout the world and lead them into making war on the Church, and that the number of the Church's enemies will then be as the sands of the sea. 'And they went up', he says,

on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. And the devil who deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.⁴⁷

This passage refers to the last judgment. I have, however, thought it proper to cite it now, lest anyone should suppose that in the 'little season' during which the devil shall be loosed there shall be no Church upon earth, whether because the devil will find no Church when he is loosed, or because he will have destroyed it by all manner of persecutions.

Thus, the devil is bound throughout the whole period embraced by the Book of Revelation, that is, from the first coming of Christ to the end of the world, which will be Christ's second coming. But this binding does not mean simply that he ceases to deceive the Church during that interval called 'a thousand years'. This is shown by the fact that he will not deceive the Church even after he is loosed. For if his being bound means that he is not able, or not permitted, to deceive the Church, then his being loosed would mean, surely, that he is now able or permitted to do so. God forbid, however, that this should be so! Rather, the binding of the devil means that he is no longer permitted to exert the whole of his power of temptation, either by force or cunning, to seduce men to his side by violent compulsion or by fraudulently deceiving them. For if he

⁴⁷ Rev. 20,9f.

were permitted to do so for so long a time – a time of such great weakness for so many – he would overturn the faith of many whom God would not wish to suffer such a fate, or prevent them from believing at all. He is bound, then, so that he may not do this.

But the devil will be loosed when the 'little season' comes. For we read that he and his angels will rage with their whole strength for three years and six months.⁴⁸ Yet those against whom he is to make war will be men of such a kind that they cannot be conquered by his great onset and all his wiles. But if he had never been loosed his malign power would have been less plainly apparent, and the endurance of the Holy City would have been less thoroughly proved in its great faithfulness. In short, the good use to which the Almighty puts even the devil's great wickedness would have been less clearly perceived. Thus, the Almighty does not entirely remove the possibility of temptation from His saints; rather, He protects only their inner man, where dwells their faith in God, so that they may profit from the devil's outward assault. He binds the devil, along with those who take his part, so that he may not, by pouring forth his malice and exerting it to the utmost of his power, hinder or break down the faith of those innumerable weak persons, already believing or yet to believe, from whom the Church is to be multiplied and filled up. In the end, however, the Almighty will loose him, so that the City of God may behold how mighty a foe it has overcome, to the immense glory of its Redeemer, its Helper, its Deliverer. And what are we in comparison with those saints and believers of the future, who are to be tempted by the loosing against them of such a foe: a foe whom we resist at such dire peril even when he is bound? Yet there is no doubt that even in this intervening time there have been, and are, some soldiers of Christ who are so prudent and strong, that if they were to be alive in this mortal condition then, at the time of the devil's loosing, they would both most wisely guard against, and most patiently endure, all his wiles and assaults.

This binding of the devil was not only effected at the time when the Church was beginning to spread more and more widely beyond the land of Judea and into other nations. The devil is being bound even now, and will continue to be bound until the end of the world,

* Cf. Rev. 12,12; 11,2; 12,6; 13,5.

when he is to be loosed. For even now men are being converted to the faith from the unbelief in which the devil once held them in his possession; and there is no doubt that they will go on being converted until the end of the world. The 'strong man', then, is bound every time a man who is part of his 'property' is plucked from him. And the bottomless pit in which he is shut up did not come to an end when those men died who were alive when he was first shut up in it. Other men who hate the Christians have succeeded them as new generations have been born, and will go on doing so until the world ends; and in the blind depths of their hearts the devil is shut up every day, as if in a bottomless pit.

We may well ask, however, whether during those last three years and six months, when the devil is to be loosed and will rage with all his might, anyone will come to the faith who has not already done so. For if the property of the strong man is to be taken from him even when he is unloosed, how would it remain true that 'No man can enter into a strong man's house, and take his property, except he first bind the strong man'? It seems, therefore, that we are compelled by this passage to believe that, in that period, brief though it is, no one will be added to the people of Christ, but that the devil will wage war against those who have already become Christians, and that, though some of these may be conquered and will follow the devil, these do not belong to the predestined number of the sons of God. For it is not for nothing that the same apostle John who wrote this Book of Revelation says in his epistle of certain persons that 'They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.'⁴⁹

But what is to become of the little ones? For it is quite impossible to believe that there will at that time be no infant children of Christians, born but not yet baptised, or that none will be born during those days. And, if there are such, it is impossible to believe that their parents will not find some way of bringing them to 'the washing of regeneration'.⁵⁰ But, in this case, how can this 'property' be snatched away from the devil when he is loose, if it is also true that 'No man can enter into a strong man's house, and take his property,

⁴⁹ 1 John 2,19

⁵⁰ Titus 3,5.

except he first bind the strong man? In truth, however, we are to believe that, even at that time, there will be no lack either of those who fall away from the Church or of those who come to her. In those days, parents who seek baptism for their little ones and those who come to believe for the first time will all show sufficient fortitude to give them victory over the 'strong man', even though he is not bound. Even though he plots with all his wiles and assails them with a might never before seen, these people will have the vigilance to understand what he is doing and the endurance to resist him; and so they will be taken from him even though he is not bound.

But that is not to say that the statement in the Gospel is false, that 'No man can enter into a strong man's house, and take his property, except he first bind the strong man.' For the truth of this statement is to be understood according to the preservation of the following order: first, the 'strong man' is bound; then, his property is taken; but, finally, the Church is so greatly multiplied among all nations far and wide, by the accession of both strong and weak, that, by reason of her most firm belief in things divinely foretold and fulfilled, she is now strong enough to carry off the devil's property even though he has been loosed. To be sure, we shall have to admit that 'because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold'.⁵¹ Again, it is true that many of those who are not written in the book of life will succumb to the unprecedented and great persecutions and deceits of the devil, now loosed. But it is true also that many will at that time be able to prevail over the devil even though he is loosed. We must suppose this to be true of those good men who will be found faithful at that time; but it will also be true of some who have hitherto been outside the Church. For these latter will become more firmly resolved to believe what they did not believe before, and strong enough to overcome. And they will do this with the help of God's grace, and by the study of the Scriptures in which is foretold, among other things, the very end which they now perceive to be approaching. And if this is to be so, the binding of the devil must be said to come first, so that the taking of his property may follow both when he is bound and when he is loosed. For this is what is meant when it is said, 'No man can enter into a

⁵¹ Matt. 24,12.

strong man's house, and take his property, except he first bind the strong man.'

9 What is meant by the reign of the saints with Christ for a thousand years, and how this differs from the eternal kingdom

But while the devil is bound for a thousand years, the saints reign with Christ, also for a thousand years; which are without doubt to be understood in the same way; that is, as the period beginning with Christ's first coming. This thousand-year reign is quite different from that kingdom with respect to which he will say at the end, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'⁵² For the saints of Christ are reigning with Him even now, albeit in a far different and far inferior way: those saints to whom He says, 'Lo, I am with you always, even to the consummation of the world.'⁵³ Otherwise, the Church of the present time could not be called His kingdom, or the kingdom of heaven. Certainly it is in this period that the scribe 'instructed in the kingdom of God', whom we mentioned above, 'brings forth from his treasure things new and old'.⁵⁴ And it is from the Church that the reapers are to gather out the tares which the Lord has allowed to grow together with the wheat until the harvest, as He explains when He says, 'The harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered together and burned with fire, so shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of man shall send His angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all offences.'⁵⁵ Can He here be speaking of that kingdom in which there are no offences? If not, then it must be out of His present kingdom, the Church in this world, that they are gathered. Again, He says, 'He that breaketh one of the least of these commandments, and teacheth men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth and teacheth thus shall be

⁵² Matt. 25,34.

⁵³ Matt. 28,20.

⁵⁴ Matt. 13,52.

⁵⁵ Matt. 13,39ff.

called great in the kingdom of heaven.'⁵⁶ He speaks of both as being 'in the kingdom of heaven', the man who does not keep the commandments which He enjoins (for 'to break' means 'not to observe', 'not to perform') and the man who performs them, and teaches others to do the same. But he calls the former 'least' and the other 'great'. And He straightway adds, 'For I say unto you, that except your righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees' – that is, the righteousness of those who break what they teach; for He elsewhere says of the scribes and Pharisees, 'For they say and do not':⁵⁷ except, therefore, your righteousness exceed theirs, that is, so that you do not break what you teach, but rather perform it, 'ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven'.⁵⁸

In one sense, then, we are to understand the kingdom of heaven as a kingdom in which both are included: that is, the man who breaks what he teaches, and he who performs it; though one is the least and the other is great in the kingdom. In another sense, however, it is a kingdom into which only he who performs what he teaches will enter. In the first sense, then, where persons of both kinds are present, the 'kingdom of heaven' is the Church as she now is. But in the second, where only persons of the second kind will be present, it is the Church as she will be when no wicked man shall be within her. Therefore, the Church even now is the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of heaven. Thus, even now the saints of Christ reign with Him, though not in the same way as they will reign hereafter. But the tares do not reign with Him, even though they are growing in the Church alongside the wheat. For only those reign with Christ who do what the apostle says: 'If ye be risen with Christ, mind the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Seek those things which are above, not the things which are on the earth.'⁵⁹ He also says of such persons that their 'conversation is in heaven'.⁶⁰ In short, they reign with Him who are in His kingdom in such a way that they themselves are His kingdom. But, to say nothing of anything else, in what sense can those people be the kingdom of Christ who, though they are

⁵⁶ Matt. 5,19.

⁵⁷ Matt. 23,3.

⁵⁸ Matt. 5,20.

⁵⁹ Coloss. 3,1f.

⁶⁰ Phil. 3,20

included in it until all offences are gathered out of it at the end of the world, nonetheless seek their own things in it, and not 'the things which are Jesus Christ's'.⁶¹

It is of this kingdom militant, therefore, in which conflict is still carried on against the enemy, that the Book of Revelation speaks in the passage which we are here considering. In this kingdom, we are either striving against our vices when they resist us or governing them when they yield, until we come to that most peaceful kingdom in which we shall reign without an enemy. This kingdom militant, therefore, is the first resurrection, which 'now is'. For the apostle John first says that the devil is bound for a thousand years, and afterwards loosed for a little season. Then, he proceeds to give a short account of what the Church does, or of what is done in the Church, during those thousand years. 'And I saw thrones', he says 'and they sat upon them, and judgment was given'.⁶² We are not to suppose that this is a reference to the last judgment. Rather, it is to be understood as a reference to the thrones of the rulers, and to the rulers themselves, by whom the Church is now governed. And it seems that there is no better way of interpreting 'and judgment was given' than with reference to the words, 'Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven'.⁶³ Hence the apostle says, 'What have I to do with judging them that are without? Do ye not judge them that are within?'⁶⁴ 'And I saw the souls', says John, 'of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus'; and then, a little later, he goes on to say that 'they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years'.⁶⁵ These, clearly, are the souls of the martyrs who are not yet restored to their bodies.

For the souls of the pious dead are not separated from the Church, which is even now the kingdom of Christ. Otherwise they would not be commemorated at the altar of God when we partake of the body of Christ.⁶⁶ Again, if they were, it would not profit us to flee to the Church's baptism when danger threatens, for fear that

⁶¹ Phil. 2,21.

⁶² Rev. 20,4.

⁶³ Matt. 18,18.

⁶⁴ 1 Cor. 5,12.

⁶⁵ Rev. 20,4.

⁶⁶ Cf. Augustine, *Confess.*, 9,13,36; *Ench.*, 29,9; *De cur. pro mort. ger.*, 3,1.

this life should end without baptism, or to confession, lest we be sundered from this body without penance and in bad conscience. Why are these things done, unless it is because the faithful, even though dead, are still Christ's members? Their souls, therefore, even though not yet united with their bodies, already reign with Him while those thousand years are running their course. In another part of the same book, therefore, we read: 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.'⁶⁷ Thus, the Church now begins to reign with Christ among the living and the dead. For, as the apostle says, 'Christ died that He might be Lord both of the living and the dead.'⁶⁸ Only the souls of the martyrs are mentioned in the Book of Revelation, because this reign after death belongs especially to those who have striven for the truth even unto death. But, taking the part for the whole, we understand the Scripture to mean that the rest of the dead also belong to the Church, which is the kingdom of Christ.

We come next to the words: 'And which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands'.⁶⁹ These words we are to take as applying to both the living and the dead. The question of what this 'beast' stands for is worthy of more careful consideration. It would not, however, be inconsistent with the true faith to understand the beast as signifying the ungodly city itself, the fellowship of unbelievers who stand opposed to the faithful people and the City of God. 'His image' seems to me to mean 'his falsehood': that is, the falsehood shown by those men who profess the faith but live like unbelievers. For they feign to be what they are not, and they are called Christians not from a true likeness, but from a false image. For it is not only the declared enemies of the name of Christ and of His most glorious City who belong to this beast. There are also the tares which are to be gathered out of His kingdom, which is the Church, at the end of the world. And who are those who do not worship the beast and his image except those who do as the apostle says: 'Be not yoked with unbelievers'?⁷⁰ For those who have not

⁶⁷ Rev. 14,13.

⁶⁸ Rom. 14,9.

⁶⁹ Rev. 20,4.

⁷⁰ 2 Cor. 6,14.

worshipped the beast have not consented to him and are not subject to him. And so they have not received his mark – that is, the sign of guilt – either upon their forehead, by reason of what they profess, or upon their hand, by reason of what they do. Those, then, who are strangers to such evils, whether they still live in this mortal flesh, or are dead, are reigning even now with Christ, throughout this whole period signified by the thousand years, and in a manner appropriate to this time.

‘But the rest of the dead lived not again’,⁷¹ it says; for the hour has now come ‘when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live’:⁷² the rest of them, therefore, shall not live. But the words which come next, ‘until the thousand years were finished’, mean that they did not come to life when they should have done: that is, by passing over from death to life. When the day comes on which the resurrection of the body itself will take place, therefore, they will come forth from the grave not to life, but to judgment: that is, to damnation, which is called the second death. For anyone who has not come to life until the thousand years is finished – anyone, that is, who during the whole of that time when the first resurrection is being effected has not heard the voice of the Son of God, and passed over from death to life – will surely pass, at the second resurrection, which is of the flesh, into the second death with his flesh. For the Scripture now goes on to say, ‘This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection’,⁷³ that is, who has a share in it. And he who has a share in it is he who not only comes to life again from the death of sin, but remains steadfast in this renewed life. ‘On such’, the Revelation says, ‘the second death hath no power’. Death, therefore, does have power over the rest, of whom it has already been said that ‘The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.’ For in all that intervening time, which is called a thousand years, however long their life was in the body during that time, they did not come to life again from the death in which their ungodliness held them. Thus, they did not come to share in the first resurrection, by virtue of which the second death would have had no power over them.

⁷¹ Rev. 20,5.

⁷² John 5,25.

⁷³ Rev. 20,6.

10 What we are to say to those who believe that the resurrection applies only to bodies and not to souls

There are those who suppose that resurrection can only be said to belong to the body; and so they contend that this first resurrection also will be a resurrection of the body. For, they say, only that which falls can rise again. Now bodies fall when they die; indeed, corpses [*cadavera*] are so called from their falling [*cadendo*]. Therefore, they say, there cannot be a resurrection of souls, but only of bodies. What, then, do they have to say against the apostle, when he speaks of the resurrection of souls? For when he says, 'If ye have risen with Christ, mind the things that are above',⁷⁴ he is certainly speaking to those who have risen in the inner man, not the outer. He speaks in the same sense, though in different words, elsewhere, saying: 'That as Christ has risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life.'⁷⁵ So too here: 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.'⁷⁶

They say, then, that only that which falls can rise again; and so they suppose that the resurrection is a resurrection of the body and not of the soul, because only bodies fall. Why do they not hear the following words: 'Ye that fear the Lord, wait for His mercy; and go not aside lest ye fall';⁷⁷ and 'To his own Master he stands or falls';⁷⁸ and 'He that thinketh he standeth, let him take heed lest he fall'?⁷⁹ For the fall that we are here warned to take heed of is, I imagine, the fall of the soul, not of the body. If, therefore, resurrection is of things that fall, and if souls also fall, then surely we must confess that souls rise again.

Now having said that 'On such the second death hath no power', the Scripture goes on to add, 'but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years'. Clearly, this does not refer only to the bishops and presbyters, who are now distinguished by the name of 'priests' in the Church. Rather, just as we call all Christians 'Christs' in virtue of their mystical anointing

⁷⁴ Coloss. 3,1f.

⁷⁵ Rom. 6,4.

⁷⁶ Eph. 5,14.

⁷⁷ Eccles. 2,7

⁷⁸ Rom. 14,4.

⁷⁹ 1 Cor. 10,12.

(*chrisma*), so do we call them all 'priests' because they are all members of the one Priest. The apostle Peter therefore says of them that they are 'A holy people, a royal priesthood'.⁸⁰ When he says 'priests of God and of Christ', that is, of the Father and the Son, John certainly suggests – albeit briefly and in passing – that he is speaking of Christ as God, even though it was in the form of a servant and as the Son of man that Christ was made a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. But this is a point which I have already mentioned more than once in this work.⁸¹

II Of Gog and Magog, who are to be stirred up by the devil to persecute the Church, when he is loosed at the end of the world

'And when the thousand years are expired', the Book of Revelation goes on, 'Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.'⁸² He will deceive them at that time, therefore, in order to gather them together to battle. For even before this he has been deceiving them in whatever ways he can, by many and various evils. But when it is said that he 'shall go out', this means that he will no longer hate in secret, but burst forth into overt persecution. This, indeed, will be the last persecution, when the last judgment is at hand; and it will be suffered by the Holy Church in all the world: that is, the universal City of Christ will be persecuted by the universal city of the devil, wherever each exists on the face of the earth. For we are not to understand 'Gog and Magog' as if these were the names of some barbarous nations established on some part of the earth: whether as the Getae and Massagetae (as some have supposed, because of the initial letters of their names)⁸³ or some other foreign peoples not under the authority of Rome. On the contrary, when the words 'the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth' are followed by 'Gog and Magog', it

⁸⁰ 1 Pet. 2,9.

⁸¹ Cf. Phil. 2,7; Psalm 110,4; Heb. 7,17ff, Bk XVI,22; XVII,17; 20.

⁸² Rev. 20,7f.

⁸³ Cf. Ps.-Prosper Aquitanicus, *De promiss. et praedict. Dei*, 13

is made clear to us that they are spread throughout all the world. For, as I understand it, the word 'Gog' means 'roof' and 'Magog' 'from a roof', or 'a house' and 'one who comes forth from the house'.⁸⁴ They are, therefore, the nations in which, as we have indicated above,⁸⁵ the devil is shut up as in a bottomless pit; and the devil himself is, as it were, the one who rushes out and comes forth from them: they are 'the roof', and he is the one who comes forth 'from the roof'. If, however, we refer both names to the nations, instead of applying one to the nations and the other to the devil, then they will be 'the roof' because the ancient enemy is shut up in them and, in a certain sense, covered by them; and they will also be 'from the roof' when they burst forth from hidden to open hatred. The words, 'And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved City'⁸⁶ clearly do not signify that the nations have come, or will come, to one place, as if the camp of the saints and the beloved City are to be in some particular location. For the camp of the saints and the beloved City are simply the Church of Christ spread throughout the whole earth. Thus, wherever the Church is at that time – and it will be among all the nations, which is the meaning of the words 'on the breadth of the earth' – there also shall the camp of the saints be; there shall be that City which is beloved of God. And there shall that City be compassed about by the fierce persecutions of all her enemies; for they also will be present with that City among all nations. That is, the City will be surrounded, hard pressed, shut up in the straits of tribulation; yet she will not cease from her struggle: that struggle which is here called 'the camp'.

12 Whether the fire that came down from heaven and devoured Gog and Magog refers to the final punishment of the wicked

Then come the words, 'And fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.' But these words must not be thought to refer to that final punishment which is to be inflicted when Christ

⁸⁴ Cf. Ezek. 38,1; Gen. 10,2; Jerome, *Comm. in Ezek.*, 11,38; Ambrose, *De fide*, 2,6.

⁸⁵ Cf. Ch. 7.

⁸⁶ Rev. 20,9.

shall say, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.'⁸⁷ For, then, the damned are to be cast into the fire: fire is not to come down from heaven upon them. Rather, this fire from heaven, properly understood, is the firmness of the saints, by which they refuse to yield to those who rage against them and to do their will. For the heaven is the 'firmament' through whose 'firmness' those who assail the saints will be tormented by their fiercely blazing zeal: tormented, because they will not be able to drag the saints of Christ into the camp of Antichrist. This zeal will be the fire that devours them, and it will be 'from God' because it is by the gift of God that the saints are made unconquerable, and so torment their enemies. For while 'zeal' has a good sense, as in 'The zeal of Thine house hath consumed me',⁸⁸ it also has an unfavourable sense, as in, 'Zeal hath possessed the uninstructed people, and now fire shall consume the enemies.'⁸⁹ The words 'and now' clearly indicate that what is being referred to here is not the fire of the last judgment. Alternatively, the fire that comes down from heaven and devours them may be a reference to the blow with which Christ will smite those persecutors of the Church whom he shall find alive upon the earth when he shall slay Antichrist 'with the spirit of His mouth'.⁹⁰ But even this is not the last judgment of the ungodly; for the last judgment is that which they will suffer when the resurrection of the body has come to pass.

13 Whether the time of the persecution of Antichrist should be counted as part of the thousand years

The final persecution, to be presided over by Antichrist, will last for three years and six months. We have already said this, for it is laid down earlier in the Book of Revelation, and also by the prophet Daniel.⁹¹ Short though this time is, we may well wonder whether it is included in those thousand years during which the devil is bound and the saints reign with Christ, or whether this 'little season' is to be added on to those years. For if we say that it is included in the

⁸⁷ Matt. 25,41.

⁸⁸ Psalm 69,9.

⁸⁹ Is. 26,11 (LXX).

⁹⁰ Cf. 2 Thess. 2,8.

⁹¹ Cf. Ch. 8; Dan. 12,7.

thousand years, then we shall find that the reign of the saints with Christ is longer than the period during which the devil is bound, rather than the same. For the saints who are to reign with their King will certainly do so during that time of persecution, when they will triumph over its great evils even though the devil is no longer bound, and so can persecute them with all his strength. How is it, therefore, that Scripture describes both the devil's binding and the reign of the saints as occupying the same thousand years, if the devil's binding is to end three years and six months before the thousand-year reign of the saints with Christ does? But if, on the other hand, we say that this brief period of persecution is not to be counted as part of the thousand years, but as an addition to it, we shall then be able to understand the Book of Revelation literally. For it says first that the priests of God and of Christ shall reign with Him for a thousand years; and it then adds, 'And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison.'⁹² Taken literally, these words signify that the reign of the saints and the bondage of the devil are to end at the same time. Thus, the time of persecution coincides neither with the reign of the saints nor with the bondage of Satan. Rather, we believe that it is to be counted as an additional period.

If this is so, however, we shall then be compelled to confess that the saints will not reign with Christ during that time of persecution. But who would venture to say that Christ's members will not reign with Him then, at the very time when they will cleave to him most closely and strongly: at the very time when the glory of resistance will be all the greater, and the martyr's crown all the richer, because the strife of war is all the more bitter? Alternatively, if we are to say that they will not then be reigning, because of the tribulations that they will be suffering, it will follow that in earlier days also, during those thousand years, all the saints who suffered tribulation cannot be said to have been reigning with Christ during the time of their tribulation. Accordingly, then, those whose souls the author of the Book of Revelation writes that he beheld who were 'Beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God'⁹³ did not reign

⁹² Rev. 20,6f.

⁹³ Rev. 6,9.

with Christ while they were suffering persecution, and therefore were not of the kingdom of Christ even though Christ held them most excellently in His possession. But this conclusion is quite absurd, and to be rejected in every way. For it is certain that the victorious souls of the most glorious martyrs, having conquered and reached the end of all their pain and toils, and having laid down their mortal members, have reigned, and do reign, with Christ until the thousand years are expired, so that they may thereafter reign with Him when they have received their immortal bodies.

During those three years and a half, therefore, the souls of those who were slain as His martyrs – both those who had already left their bodies and those who will leave them in that last persecution – will reign with Him until this mortal world is ended; and then they will pass into that kingdom in which there will be no death. Thus, the reign of the saints with Christ will last for more years than the bondage and imprisonment of the devil; for the saints will reign with their King, the Son of God, during the three and a half years when the devil is no longer bound. The conclusion remains, therefore, that when we hear that the priests of God and of Christ shall reign with Him for a thousand years, and that when the thousand years are expired Satan shall be released from his prison, we are to understand this to mean one of two things. On the one hand, it may be that the thousand years of the reign of the saints does not come to an end, though the bondage and imprisonment of the devil does. In other words, both sides have their ‘thousand years’, in the sense of a period of time appropriate to each, but each side has a different actual duration, with the reign of the saints being longer and the bondage of the devil shorter. Alternatively, since three years and six months is only a very short period of time, we may believe that it is to be neither subtracted from the whole time of Satan’s bondage, nor added to the whole duration of the reign of the saints. We made a similar point in the sixteenth book of this work, where we discussed the period of four hundred years.⁹⁴ For there were rather more than four hundred, yet they were expressed as a round number of four hundred. Indeed, similar expressions are often found in the sacred writings, if one will take note of them.

⁹⁴ Cf. Bk XVI, 24.

14 Of the damnation of the devil and his followers;
and (by way of recapitulation) of the bodily
resurrection of all the dead, and of the last judgment

After this mention of the final persecution, John briefly describes all that the devil and that city of which he is the prince are to suffer in the last judgment. For he says, 'And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.'⁹⁵ As we have already said,⁹⁶ 'the beast' is properly understood to signify the ungodly city. The false prophet is either Antichrist or that image – that is, that pretence – of which we spoke in the same place. After this, he gives a short account of the last judgment itself, which will take place at the second resurrection of the dead, that is, of the body; and he tells us how it was revealed to him. 'And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from Whose face the earth and the heaven would flee away; and there would be found no place for them.'⁹⁷ He does not say, 'And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, and from His face the earth and the heaven had fled away', because this had not yet happened: that is, it did not happen before judgment had been passed on the living and the dead. Rather, he says that he saw Him sitting on the throne from Whose face the earth and the heaven would flee away after the judgment. But when the judgment is accomplished, this heaven and this earth will pass away, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth. For when this world passes away, this will not come about by the utter destruction of things, but by their transformation. This is why the apostle says, 'For the figure of this world passeth away. I would have you be without anxiety.'⁹⁸ It is, then, the figure, not the nature, that passeth away.

When, therefore, John has said that he had seen Him sitting upon the throne from Whose face the earth and the heaven were presently to flee away, he said: 'And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of the life of each man: and the dead

⁹⁵ Rev. 20,10

⁹⁶ Cf. Ch. 9.

⁹⁷ Rev. 20,11.

⁹⁸ 1 Cor. 7,31f.

were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.'⁹⁹ He speaks of 'books' opened, and 'a book'; but he remains silent as to the nature of this book 'which is', he says, 'the book of the life of each man'. The 'books' of which he speaks first, therefore, must be understood as the sacred books of the Old and New Testaments, which were opened to show what commandments God has enjoined upon us; whereas the other book, the book of the life of each man, was opened to show which of these commandments each man had kept or not kept. If we imagine this book to be a book in the literal sense, who could measure its size or length? How much time would it take to read a book in which the whole life of each man is written? Will there be as many angels present as men at the last judgment, so that every man will hear his life recited by the angel assigned to him? In that case, therefore, there would not be one book for all lives, but one for each. However, the Scripture wishes us to take it as one book. It says, 'another book was opened'. We must therefore understand this book to signify a certain divine power, by which it will be made possible for every man to recall to memory all his own works, both good and evil, and for the mind to review them all with miraculous speed, so that each man's knowledge will accuse or excuse his conscience,¹⁰⁰ and thus all and each will be judged simultaneously. And this divine power is no doubt called a 'book' because we shall as it were read in it all that it causes us to remember.

Then, in order to show us who the dead are, the small and the great, who are to be judged, John recapitulates, as if going back to make a point which he had omitted, or rather deferred: 'And the sea presented the dead which were in it; and death and hell gave up the dead which were in them.'¹⁰¹ Beyond doubt, this came to pass before the dead were judged; yet it is the judgment which is spoken of first. This is why I said that he went back, by way of recapitulation, to make a point which he had omitted. Now, however, he keeps to the sequence of events; and, in order to show us that sequence, he repeats in its own place, and here more suitably, what he has already said of the dead who were judged. For after he has said, 'And the sea presented the dead which were in it; and

⁹⁹ Rev. 20,12.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Rom. 2,15.

¹⁰¹ Rev. 20,13.

death and hell gave up the dead which were in them', he straightway adds what he had stated a little before: 'And they were judged every man according to his works.'

15 Who the dead are who are yielded up to judgment by the sea, and by death and hell

But who are the dead who were in the sea, and whom the sea presented? For this cannot mean that those who die in the sea are not in hell, or that their bodies are preserved in the sea; and it would be still more absurd to suppose that the sea has the good dead in its keeping, and hell the wicked. Who would think such a thing? Some, however, suppose that 'the sea' in this passage stands for 'the present age'; and, indeed, this is a suitable interpretation. For when John wished to signify that judgment is to be passed on those whom Christ will find on earth still in the body, at the same time as on those who are to rise again, he called them 'the dead'. And by this he meant both the good, to whom it is said, 'For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God',¹⁰² and the wicked, of whom it is said, 'Let the dead bury their dead.'¹⁰³ Again, it may be that they are called 'the dead' because they wear mortal bodies. This is why the apostle says, 'The body indeed is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness':¹⁰⁴ in other words, in a man who is alive and still in the body, there is both a body which is dead and a spirit which is life. He did not say that the body is 'mortal', but that it is 'dead', although a little later he speaks of the same bodies in the more usual way, as 'mortal'. Thus, we conclude that 'the sea presented the dead which were in it' means that the present age gave up all who were in it, but who were not yet dead, to judgment.

'And death and hell gave up the dead which were in them.' The sea merely 'presented' them, for as they were then, so were they found. But death and hell gave them up, because they recalled them to the life which they had already left. And perhaps it was not without reason that John considered it insufficient to speak only of

¹⁰² Coloss. 3,3.

¹⁰³ Matt. 8,33.

¹⁰⁴ Rom. 8,10.

'death' or 'hell', but employed both words. For perhaps he used 'death' to signify the good, who could suffer only death, and not hell also; and 'hell' to signify the wicked, who suffer the punishment of hell also. After all, we believe that the holy men of old, who held fast to the faith of Christ when Christ was yet to come, dwelt in places which, though parts of hell, were very far away from the torments of the ungodly. We believe that they dwelt there until the blood of Christ and his descent into those places redeemed them; and this does not seem absurd. So, too, then, good believers, now redeemed by the shedding of His blood as their ransom, surely have no knowledge of hell, as they wait to be restored to their bodies and to receive the good things which are their due.

Then, when he has said that 'They were judged every man according to his works', John briefly tells us what manner of judgment this was: 'And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire.' The words 'death' and 'hell' here signify the devil, who is the author of death and of the pangs of hell, and the whole company of the demons. For this is what he has said above, and in clearer terms, in his earlier statement that 'The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.' But, as an obscure addition to this earlier statement there occur the words, 'where the beast and the false prophet are'; and he now makes these words clearer, saying: 'They who were not found written in the book of life were cast into the lake of fire.' This 'book' is not an aid to God's memory, lest he err through forgetfulness! Rather, it signifies His predestination of those to whom eternal life is to be given. It is not that God is ignorant of their existence, and therefore has to refer to a book in order to know of it. Rather, His foreknowledge of them, which cannot fail, is itself the book of life in which they are written, that is, known beforehand.

16 Of the new heaven and the new earth

Having finished his prophecy of the judgment whereby the wicked are to be judged, it remains for John to speak of the good also. Thus, having briefly expounded the Lord's words, 'These shall go away into everlasting punishment', he now proceeds to expound the words which immediately follow these: 'But the righteous into life

eternal'.¹⁰⁵ 'And I saw', he says, 'a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea'.¹⁰⁶ This will come to pass in the order which he has already specified in advance, when he said, 'I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from Whose face the earth and heaven would flee away.'¹⁰⁷ For as soon as those who are not written in the book of life have been judged and cast into the eternal fire (and no one, I suppose, knows what kind of fire this is, or in what part of the world or universe it is to be, unless perhaps there is someone to whom the Holy Spirit has shown these things): as soon as this has been accomplished, the figure of this world will pass away in a conflagration of all the fires of the universe, just as it was of old drowned by the inundation of all the waters of the universe. By that conflagration, as I call it, the qualities of the corruptible elements which were fitted to our corruptible bodies will wholly perish in the burning. Then, by a miraculous transformation, our very substance will take on the qualities which belong to immortal bodies; and the purpose of this will be to equip the world, now made new and better, with a fitting population of men who are themselves renewed and made better even in their flesh.

As for the statement that 'there was no more sea', I should not find it easy to say whether the sea is to be dried up by that great heat, or will itself also be changed into something better. We do indeed read that there is to be a new heaven and a new earth; but I do not recall having anywhere read anything of a new sea, except, perhaps, what is found in this same book: 'As it were a sea of glass like crystal'.¹⁰⁸ But John was not at that point speaking of the end of this world, nor was he speaking of the sea in the literal sense. Rather, he said, 'As it were a sea'. After all, the prophetic style of speech loves to veil its meaning to a certain extent by mingling figurative expressions with literal ones in what it says. It may be, then, that the words 'and there was no more sea' refer to the 'sea' of which he had just said that 'the sea gave up the dead which were in it'. For then shall there be no more of this world, no more of the

¹⁰⁵ Matt. 25,46.

¹⁰⁶ Rev. 21,1.

¹⁰⁷ Rev. 20,11; cf. Ch. 14.

¹⁰⁸ Rev. 4,6; 15,2.

storms and tempests of this mortal life; and this is what the word 'sea' here signifies.

17 Of the unending glory of the Church

Then he says:

And I saw a great city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice from the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: because the former things have passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.¹⁰⁹

This City is said to come down out of heaven because the grace by which God formed it is heavenly. It is for this reason that He also says, through Isaiah, 'I am the Lord that formed thee.'¹¹⁰ This City has been coming down out of heaven since its beginning, from the time when the number of its citizens began to increase in this present age by the grace of God which comes from above through 'the washing of regeneration'¹¹¹ in the Holy Spirit sent down out of heaven. But by the judgment of God, which will be the last judgment, delivered through His Son Jesus Christ, the glory of that city will by God's gift appear with a clarity so great and so new that no trace of what is old shall remain. Even our bodies will pass from their old corruption and mortality into a new incorruption and immortality.¹¹²

Now it seems to me that it would be a great impertinence to take this passage as referring to the time when the City reigns with its King for a thousand years. For John says most clearly, 'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more

¹⁰⁹ Rev. 20,2ff.

¹¹⁰ Is. 45,8 (LXX).

¹¹¹ Titus 3,5.

¹¹² Cf. 1 Cor. 15,53f.

death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.' And who would be so absurd, so deranged by his love of obstinate contention, as to dare to affirm that, in the midst of the vexations of this mortal condition, not only the holy people, I say, but each and every saint who lives, or will do so or has done so, has no tears and no sorrows in this life? For, on the contrary, the holier a man is, and the fuller of holy desire, so much the more abundant is his weeping when he prays. Do we not hear the voice of a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem in these words: 'My tears have been my meat day and night';¹¹³ and 'Every night shall I make my bed to swim; with my tears shall I water my couch';¹¹⁴ and 'My groaning is not hid from Thee';¹¹⁵ and 'My sorrow was renewed'.¹¹⁶ Are we not God's children when we 'groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up in life'?¹¹⁷ Or when, even though we 'have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body'?¹¹⁸ Was not the apostle Paul a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem? And was he not all the more so when he had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart for the Israelites, his brethren according to the flesh?¹¹⁹ Moreover, when will there be no more death in that city, except when it shall be said, 'O death, where is thy contention? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin.'¹²⁰ Clearly there will be no more sin when the time comes when we can ask where it is. For the time being, however, it is not some feeble citizen of this city, but no less a person than John himself who cries out in his epistle, 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.'¹²¹

In this book called Revelation, there are indeed many obscure statements, intended to exercise the mind of the reader, and there are only a few statements plain enough in their meaning to enable

¹¹³ Psalm 42,3.

¹¹⁴ Psalm 6,6.

¹¹⁵ Psalm 38,9.

¹¹⁶ Psalm 39,2.

¹¹⁷ 2 Cor. 5,2ff.

¹¹⁸ Rom. 8,23.

¹¹⁹ Rom. 9,2ff.

¹²⁰ 1 Cor. 15,55f.

¹²¹ 1 John 1,8.

us to infer the meaning of others from them, and then only with some labour. This is chiefly because John repeats the same things in many different ways, so that he seems to be speaking of different matters whereas he is in fact speaking of the same things in different words. But this is not true when he says, 'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.' Here, it is as plain as day that the reference is to the world to come, and to the immortality and eternity of the saints; for only then and there will these things cease to be. If we think this obscure, we can hardly expect to find anything that is clear in our reading of the Holy Scriptures.

18 What the apostle Peter foretells of the last judgment

Again, let us now see what the apostle Peter has written concerning this judgment.

There shall come in the last day scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same Word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being

on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.¹²²

Peter has said nothing here of the resurrection of the dead; but he has certainly said enough regarding the destruction of the world. Moreover, in mentioning the Flood that happened so long ago, he seems to admonish us to believe that, at the end of this age, the world is to perish entirely. For he says that, at that time, the world which then was perished; and not only the earth itself, but also the heavens, by which, clearly, we are to understand the air, whose place and room was filled up by the waters. Thus it was the whole, or almost the whole, of the windy air that was converted into moisture, and in this way perished together with the earth, whose former aspect had been destroyed by the Flood. (Peter calls this air 'heaven', or, rather, 'the heavens'; but he is clearly referring to the lower parts of the heavens, not those upper regions where the sun, moon and stars are established.) 'But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same Word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.' Therefore the heavens and the earth, that is, the world which replaced the world destroyed by the Flood, was 'kept in store' away from that water, and is itself reserved for the last fire, until 'the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men'. For Peter does not hesitate to say that men also will perish by reason of this great change. Their nature, however, will continue, though in eternal punishments.

Perhaps someone will now ask the following question. If, when the judgment is completed, this world is to burn up, where will the saints be during the time of this conflagration, before the world is replaced by the new heaven and the new earth? For they must be in some material place, since they have material bodies. We can reply that they will be in the higher regions to which the flames of that burning will not rise, just as the waters of the Flood did not. For their bodies will be of such a kind that they will be able to be in whatever place they choose. In any case, when they have become immortal and incorruptible, they will not fear the flames of that

¹²² 2 Peter 3,3ff.

conflagration. After all, even the corruptible and mortal bodies of the three men were able to live unharmed in the midst of the burning fiery furnace.¹²³

19 What the apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians concerning the appearance of Antichrist which is to precede the day of the Lord

I see that there are many things said of this last divine judgment in the Gospels and Epistles which I must here omit, lest this volume become excessively long. But I must by no means omit what the apostle Paul says in writing to the Thessalonians.

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come except the Apostate come first, and the Man of Sin be revealed, the Son of Perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now holdeth, let him hold, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked One be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they might all be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.¹²⁴

There is no doubt that he is here speaking of Antichrist and of the day of judgment (which he calls the day of the Lord). And he

¹²³ Cf. Dan. 3, 13ff.

¹²⁴ 2 Thess. 2, 1ff.

says that this day will not come unless there first comes one whom he calls 'the Apostate', that is, one who has fallen away from the Lord God. And if this name can rightly be given to all the ungodly, how much more to him! But it is uncertain in which temple he is to sit: whether in the ruined temple which was built by Solomon the king, or in the Church. For the apostle would not call the temple of any idol or demon 'the temple of God'. On this account, some wish to believe that Antichrist means here not the prince himself, but his whole body, so to speak: that is, the multitude of those who belong to him, together with himself, their prince. And they consider that it would be a more correct translation of the Greek into Latin if we were to say not 'in the temple of God', but 'as the temple of God', as if he himself were the temple of God which is the Church. There are, after all, other common expressions of this kind; as when we say 'he sits as a friend', meaning 'like a friend'.

We come next to the words, 'And now ye know what withholdeth' – that is, what obstruction or cause of delay there is – 'that he might be revealed in his time'. Here, the apostle does not choose to speak plainly because, as he says, they know already. And that is why we, who do not know what they knew, are not able to arrive at the apostle's meaning even with an effort, and no matter how much we desire to do so. This is especially so since his next statement makes his meaning even more obscure; for what does this mean? – 'For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he that now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed.' I confess that I simply do not know what this means. I will, however, not omit to mention the various conjectures of men whom I have been able to hear or read.

Some suppose that these words refer to the Roman empire, and that the apostle Paul did not wish to write in plain language for fear of incurring the reproach of wishing ill to an empire which it was hoped would be eternal. Thus, when he said 'the mystery of iniquity doth already work', he intended this to be understood as a reference to Nero, whose deeds already seemed to be like those of Antichrist. Hence, certain people suspect that Nero is to rise again and become Antichrist. Others again suppose that Nero was not killed, but concealed so that he might be believed killed, and that he is still alive in hiding. They think that he is still in the vigour of the age he had reached when he was believed to have died, and that

he will 'be revealed in his time' and restored to his throne.¹²⁵ For my part, I wonder at the presumption of those who make such guesses.

But when the apostle says, 'Only he who now holdeth, let him hold, until he be taken out of the way', it is not absurd to believe that this statement is a reference to the empire of Rome, as if it were said, 'Only he who now reigneth, let him reign, until he be taken out of the way.' 'And then shall that Wicked be revealed': there is no doubt that this signifies Antichrist. However, there are others who think that 'Ye know what withholdeth' and 'the mystery of iniquity' refer simply to the wicked and to the false believers who are in the Church, until they reach so a great a number as to become a great people for Antichrist. This, they contend, is 'the mystery of iniquity' because it is seen to be concealed. They suppose also that the apostle is exhorting the faithful to persevere tenaciously in the faith that they hold when he says, 'Only he who now holdeth, let him hold, until he be taken out of the way', that is, until the mystery of iniquity, now hidden, departs from the Church. Also, they believe that it is to this same 'mystery of iniquity' that John the evangelist refers in his epistle, when he says, 'Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.'¹²⁶ Just as, therefore, many heretics, whom John calls 'many antichrists', have gone out from the Church during the present time – the time before the end, which John calls 'the last time' – so, when the end itself comes, they shall go out who do not belong to Christ, but to that last Antichrist who will then be revealed.

There are, therefore, a number of different conjectures as to the meaning of the obscure words of the apostle. There is no doubt, however, that he said this: that Christ will not come to judge the living and the dead unless Antichrist, His adversary, come first, to

¹²⁵ According to Tacitus (*Hist.*, 2,8), this belief was widespread after the death of Nero, and exploited by various impostors. Suetonius (*Nero*, 57) says that some of Nero's supporters continued to circulate his edicts after his death, fostering the belief that he was still alive, and that an impostor presented himself as much as twenty years later.

¹²⁶ 1 John 2,18f.

deceive those who are dead in soul. But even this deception belongs to the hidden judgment of God, already given. For, as it is said, the Lord's coming 'is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish'. For then shall Satan be loosed, and, through the agency of that Antichrist, he will work 'with all power' in a lying though wondrous fashion. The question is often asked whether these are called 'signs and lying wonders' because Satan will deceive mortal senses by illusions – by seeming to do what he does not really do; or because, though they are truly wonders, they will draw men into falsehood nonetheless, in that, being ignorant of the devil's strength – and especially his strength when he has received such power as he never before possessed – they will believe that such things could only have been achieved by the power of God. For when fire fell down from heaven and at one stroke consumed all the large household and the numerous flocks of holy Job, and a great wind rushed down and smote the house and slew his children, those things were not illusions; and yet they were the work of Satan, to whom God had given the power to do such things.¹²⁷

But why they are called 'signs and lying wonders' will be made clearer to us when the time comes. Whatever the reason for their being called this, however, those who are deceived by such signs and wonders will be those who deserve to be deceived 'because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved'. Neither did the apostle hesitate to say in addition, 'And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.' 'God shall send', that is, because He will, by His own just judgment, permit the devil to do these things. The devil himself, however, will do them with a wicked and malign purpose, 'that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness'. Thus, being judged, they will be deceived, and, being deceived, they will be judged. But, when they have been judged, they will be deceived by those judgments of God, secretly just, and justly secret: by those judgments which He has never ceased to give since the first sin of the rational creatures. And, being thus deceived, they will be judged by that last and manifest judg-

¹²⁷ Cf. Job 1, 16ff.

ment pronounced by Christ Jesus: they will be most justly judged by Him, Who was Himself most unjustly judged.

20 What the apostle teaches in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians concerning the resurrection of the dead

In the passage which we have just considered, the apostle is silent as to the resurrection of the dead. In his first Epistle to the same Thessalonians, however, he writes as follows:

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.¹²⁸

These words of the apostle show us most clearly the resurrection of the dead that is to be accomplished when Christ shall come to judge the living and the dead.

But, it is often asked, are those whom Christ will find alive on earth – those represented in the above passage as the apostle and those who were alive with him – never to die at all? Or are they to pass with wondrous swiftness through death to immortality at the very point of time when they are caught up together with those who rise again to meet the Lord in the air? For we must not say that it is impossible for them to die and to come to life again while they are being borne aloft through the air. Again, we must not take the words, ‘and so shall we ever be with the Lord’, as meaning that we are to remain for ever in the air with the Lord. He Himself will certainly not remain there. He will pass through as He comes; and

¹²⁸ 1 Thess. 4, 13ff.

we shall go to meet Him as He comes, not as He remains there. We shall 'ever be with the Lord' in the sense that we shall then have everlasting bodies, and so we shall be with Him everywhere.

The apostle himself seems to require us to take his words in this sense: that is, to suppose that those whom the Lord will find alive here will suffer death and receive immortality in that brief space of time. For he says, 'In Christ shall all be made alive.'¹²⁹ Again, speaking once more of the resurrection of the body, he says in another place, 'That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die.'¹³⁰ How, then, can those whom Christ finds alive here be made alive to immortality in Him if they do not die? For we see that it is precisely on this account that it is said, 'That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die.' Alternatively, if we cannot rightly say of the bodies of men that they are 'sown' unless they in some way return to the earth by dying (as in the sentence passed by God upon the father of the human race when he transgressed: 'Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return')¹³¹ then we shall have to confess that those whom Christ will find still in their bodies when He comes are not included in the words of the apostle and of Genesis. For, being caught up in the clouds, they are certainly not 'sown', since, regardless of whether they undergo no death at all or die for a little time in the air, they neither go into the earth nor return to it.

There is, however, another saying of the same apostle, speaking of the resurrection of the body to the Corinthians: 'We shall all rise', or, as other manuscripts have it, 'We shall all sleep.'¹³² Since, therefore, resurrection cannot occur unless death precedes it, and since we cannot understand 'sleep' here to mean anything other than death, how can it be that 'We shall all' sleep or rise again, if so many whom Christ is to find in the body will neither sleep nor rise again? If, then, we believe that the saints who are to be found alive at Christ's coming and are caught up to meet Him will leave their mortal bodies as they are caught up, and will straightway return into immortal bodies – if we assume this, we shall find no difficulties in the words of the apostle. We shall find no difficulties either when he says, 'That which thou sowest is not quickened,

¹²⁹ 1 Cor. 15,22.

¹³⁰ 1 Cor. 15,36.

¹³¹ Gen. 3,19.

¹³² Cf. 1 Cor. 15,51.

except it die', or when he says, 'We shall all rise', or 'We shall all sleep.' For not even the saints shall be quickened to immortality unless they first die, however briefly. And so they will not be excluded from resurrection, which for them is to be preceded by a sleep: a very short sleep, to be sure, but still not no sleep at all.

Moreover, why should it seem incredible to us that the multitude of bodies should be, as it were, 'sown' in the air where they immediately come to life again, immortal and incorruptible? For we believe what the same apostle most clearly says, that the resurrection will take place 'in the twinkling of an eye',¹³³ and that the dust of bodies long dead will return, with an ease and swiftness that we cannot understand, to members which are thereafter to live a life without end. Again, despite the fact that their bodies, when they die, will not return to the earth, but will both die and rise again when they are caught up into the air, we do not have to conclude that those saints are to be exempt from the sentence pronounced upon man, 'Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.' 'Unto dust shalt thou return' indeed means, 'When you lose your life, you will return to what you were before you received life.' In other words, 'When the breath of life has left you, you will be what you were before you received the breath of life' (for it was into a face made of dust that God breathed the breath of life when 'man became a living soul'). It is as if it were said, 'You are animate earth, which you were not; and you will be inanimate earth, which is what you were.' This is true of all the bodies of the dead, even before they begin to rot, and it will also be true of the bodies of the saints, if they die and wherever they die: that is, when they are deprived of life, even if they are to receive it back again at once. Thus, they will 'return to' dust because, having been living men, they will become dust. In the same way, what turns to ashes becomes ashes, and what decays becomes decayed, and what was clay and is made into a pot becomes a pot; and we could say the same thing in hundreds of other instances. For the time being, however, with our inadequate powers of reasoning, we can only guess at how this is to come to pass; and we shall not be able to know until after it has happened. If we wish to be Christians, however, we must believe that the dead are to rise in the flesh when Christ comes to judge

¹³³ 1 Cor. 15,22.

the living and the dead; and our faith is certainly not in vain merely because we are unable to comprehend perfectly how this resurrection is to be effected.

As we promised above,¹³⁴ however, we must now show, as far as seems necessary, what the prophetic books of the Old Testament foretold concerning this last judgment of God. In my opinion, it will not be necessary to devote any great length of time to discussing and explaining them if the reader will take the trouble to make use of the help which we have already furnished.

21 The statements of the prophet Isaiah regarding the resurrection of the dead and the judgment of retribution

The prophet Isaiah says, 'The dead shall rise again, and all who were in the graves shall rise again; and all who are in the earth shall rejoice: for the dew which is from Thee is their health, and the earth of the wicked shall fall.'¹³⁵ The first part of this passage has to do with the resurrection of the blessed. But the words 'the earth of the wicked shall fall' is rightly understood to mean that the bodies of the ungodly shall fall into the ruin of damnation. And if we choose to study more diligently and exactly the words which apply to the resurrection of the good, we shall see that 'the dead shall rise again' must refer to the first resurrection, and the words that follow, 'and all who were in the graves shall rise again', to the second. Moreover, if we seek a reference to those saints whom the Lord is to find alive here, the next words may properly be referred to them, 'and all who are in the earth shall rejoice, for the dew which is from Thee is their health'. We are entirely right in taking 'health' here to mean 'immortality': health, that is, of the fullest kind, which is not restored by food as by a daily medicine.

In the same way, having first given hope to the good concerning the day of judgment, the same prophet now proceeds to terrify the wicked. He says,

Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will flow down upon them as a river of peace, and upon the glory of the gentiles as a rushing

¹³⁴ Cf. Ch. 4.

¹³⁵ Is. 26, 19 (LXX).

torrent: their sons shall be carried on the shoulders, and shall be comforted on the knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so shall I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. And ye shall see, and your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall rise up like a herb; and the hand of the Lord shall be known by His worshippers, and He shall threaten the contumacious. For, behold, the Lord shall come as a fire, and as a whirlwind His chariots, to execute vengeance with indignation, and wasting with a flame of fire. For with fire of the Lord shall all the earth be judged, and all flesh with His sword: many shall be wounded by the Lord.¹³⁶

In His promise to the good, we must clearly understand the 'river of peace' to signify peace in an abundance than which there could be no greater. This is the peace with which we shall be refreshed when the end comes; but we have already spoken abundantly of this in the preceding book. It is as this river that He says He will 'flow down' upon those to whom He has promised so great a blessedness. And He says this so that we may understand that all things in that place of felicity, which is in heaven, are supplied from this river. But because the peace of incorruption and immortality will flow from thence even upon earthly bodies, He therefore says that He will 'flow down' as this river, so that, in a manner of speaking, He may pour Himself out from things above to things below, and make men the equals of the angels.

Again, by 'Jerusalem', we are to understand not the Jerusalem who is in servitude with her children, but she who, according to the apostle, is the free mother of us all, eternal in heaven.¹³⁷ In her we shall be comforted after the labours of the anxieties and cares of this mortal life, and be lifted up as her children on her knees and shoulders. Then shall our rude ignorance of such great delights be invested with unwonted blessedness. There we shall see, and our hearts will rejoice. The prophet does not tell us what we shall see; but what can he mean but God, so that the promise in the Gospel may be fulfilled in us: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God?'¹³⁸ What can he mean but all those things which we believe in here, but do not yet see? For, now, we only contemplate those

¹³⁶ Is. 66,12ff.

¹³⁷ Cf. Gal. 4,26.

¹³⁸ Matt. 5,8.

things, and the idea which our feeble human capacity can form of them is incomparably less than the reality. 'And ye shall see', he says, 'and your heart shall rejoice'. Here, ye believe; there, ye shall see.

But having said, 'Your heart shall rejoice', he then adds, as though making good something which he has not said, 'And your bones shall rise up like a herb.' Here, he touches upon the resurrection of the body, lest we should suppose that the blessings of Jerusalem will pertain only to our spirits. For the resurrection of the body will not take place after we have seen; on the contrary, we shall see after it has taken place. For the prophet had already spoken of the new heavens and the new earth, while describing, often and in many different ways, the things promised to the saints at the end, and saying,

There shall be new heavens, and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind; but they shall find it in gladness and exultation. Behold, I will make Jerusalem an exultation, and my people a joy. And I will exult in Jerusalem, and joy in my people; and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her,¹³⁹

and so on. There are some who endeavour to interpret these promises as referring to what will happen in a merely fleshly sense during those thousand years. This is because, as is the usual prophetic style, figurative and literal expressions are mingled, so that a sober mind may, by useful and wholesome labour, arrive at the spiritual sense; for carnal indolence, or the slowness of the uninstructed and untrained mind, is content with the literal meaning, and supposes that there is no more inner meaning to be sought. But let what I have now said suffice as a treatment of those prophetic utterances which come before the passage with which we are here dealing.

To return, then, to the passage from which we have digressed: when the prophet had said, 'And your bones shall rise up like a herb', he added 'And the hand of the Lord shall be known by His worshippers'; and he did this in order to show that, while he is here indeed speaking of the resurrection of the body, he is referring only to the resurrection of the good. For what is this but the hand of

¹³⁹ Is. 65, 17ff.

Him who distinguishes those who worship Him from those who hold Him in contempt? As to the latter, the passage at once adds, 'And he shall threaten the contumacious', or, as another translator puts it, 'the unbelieving'. It is not that He will threaten them then; rather, the words that are now spoken in menace will then be fulfilled in effect. 'For behold,' he says, 'the Lord shall come as a fire, and as a whirlwind His chariots, to execute vengeance with indignation, and wasting with a flame of fire. For with the fire of the Lord shall all the earth be judged, and all flesh with His sword: many shall be wounded by the Lord.' 'Fire' or 'whirlwind' or 'sword' here signify the punishment of God's judgment. For when the prophet says that the Lord Himself shall come as a fire, this clearly refers to those to whom His coming will bring punishment. By His 'chariots' – the word is used in the plural – it is not inappropriate to understand the ministration of the angels. And when he says that all the earth and all flesh will be judged by the fire and sword of the Lord, we must understand this to refer not to the spiritual and holy, but to the earthly and carnal: to those to whom it is said that they 'mind earthly things',¹⁴⁰ and who are told that 'to be carnally minded is death'.¹⁴¹ It refers to those whom the Lord collectively calls 'flesh' when He says, 'My Spirit shall not always remain in these men, for they are flesh.'¹⁴²

As to the statement, 'Many shall be wounded by the Lord', this wounding is that by which the second death shall come to pass. It is possible, indeed, to understand 'fire', 'sword' and 'wound' in a good sense. For the Lord said that He wished 'to send fire on the earth',¹⁴³ and the cloven tongues seemed to the apostles to be 'like as of fire' when the Holy Spirit came.¹⁴⁴ Again, the Lord said, 'I am not come to send peace on earth, but a sword.'¹⁴⁵ And Scripture says that the word of God is a two-edged sword, because of its double edge, the two testaments.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, in the Song of Songs the holy Church says that she is wounded by love: pierced, as it

¹⁴⁰ Phil. 3,19.

¹⁴¹ Rom. 8,6.

¹⁴² Gen. 6,3.

¹⁴³ Luke 12,49.

¹⁴⁴ Acts 2,3.

¹⁴⁵ Matt. 10,34.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Heb. 4,12.

were, with the arrow of love.¹⁴⁷ Here, however, where we read or hear that the Lord shall come to execute vengeance, the sense in which we are to understand these words is clear.

Then, after briefly mentioning those who will be consumed in this judgment – and he depicts sinners and the ungodly by means of the image of those who did not abstain from the meats forbidden by the old Law¹⁴⁸ – the prophet gives a summary account of the grace of the New Testament from the first coming of the Saviour to the last judgment, of which we are now treating; and so he brings his discourse to an end. For he tells us that the Lord says that He will come to gather all nations, and that they will come and see His glory.¹⁴⁹ ‘For’, as the apostle says, ‘all have sinned, and stand in need of the glory of God’.¹⁵⁰ He says that the Lord will set a sign among them, so that they shall wonder and believe in Him. He says also that the Lord will send forth from their number men who have been saved. These men will go into divers nations, and to islands far away which have not yet heard His fame or seen His glory. They will declare His glory among the Gentiles and bring in the brethren of those to whom the prophet spoke: that is, brethren in the faith of the chosen Israelites under God the Father. And these brethren, he says, will bring from all the nations an offering to the Lord on beasts of burden and in litters, bringing their offerings to the Holy City of Jerusalem, which is now spread throughout the world in the persons of the faithful saints.¹⁵¹ These beasts and litters are rightly understood as signifying divine aid given by the two orders of God’s ministers, angelic and human. For where divine aid is given, men believe; and where they believe, they come. The Lord compares these brethren to the children of Israel offering him their sacrifices in His house with psalms, as the Church now does everywhere. And He promises that He will take some of them to be His priests and Levites:¹⁵² a promise which we now see to be fulfilled, notwithstanding the fact that priests and Levites are not now members of the same flesh and blood, which was the case at first, according to the

¹⁴⁷ Song of Solomon 2,5.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Is. 66,17.

¹⁴⁹ Is. 66,19.

¹⁵⁰ Rom. 3,23.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Is. 66,19f.

¹⁵² Cf. Is. 66,21.

order of Aaron. For, now, as befits the new covenant, where the chief priest 'according to the order of Melchizedek'¹⁵³ is Christ, we see that they are chosen according to the merit bestowed upon each man by divine grace. These priests are not to be judged according to their mere title, which is often acquired by the unworthy, but by that holiness which is not shared by good and bad men alike.

Having spoken of that clear and most evident mercy of God which is now bestowed upon the Church, the Lord then gives an assurance of the ends to which we shall come when the last judgment has separated the good and the wicked. He speaks through the prophet, or the prophet speaks on the Lord's behalf, saying,

For as the new heavens and the new earth shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain, and there shall be to them month after month, and Sabbath after Sabbath. All flesh shall come to worship before me in Jerusalem, saith the Lord. And they shall go out, and shall see the members of the men who have sinned against me: their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be for a spectacle to all flesh.¹⁵⁴

It is at this point that the prophet brings his book to an end: the point at which the world itself will come to an end. Some, indeed, have adopted the translation 'corpses of the men' rather than 'members of the men'. The word 'corpses' here is intended to signify the visible punishment of the body, even though the word 'corpse' is usually used to denote only lifeless flesh. At any rate, these bodies will be alive, because otherwise they would not be able to feel any torments. Alternatively, perhaps, those bodies may without absurdity be called 'corpses' because they are the bodies of the dead: that is, of those who are to fall into the second death. Hence the words which I have already quoted from the same prophet: 'And the earth of the wicked shall fall.'¹⁵⁵ For who does not see that corpses [*cadavera*] are so called from their falling [*cadendo*]?¹⁵⁶ Also, it is plain that those translators used 'men' to mean 'human beings'; for no one will say that female transgressors are not to incur the same

¹⁵³ Psalm 110,4.

¹⁵⁴ Is. 66,22ff.

¹⁵⁵ Is. 26,19 (LXX)

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Ch. 10.

punishment. Rather, the male sex, as being the more important and that from which the woman was derived, is intended to denote both sexes. But what is especially pertinent to our subject is the fact that the words 'all flesh shall come' refer also to the good. For God's people will be made up of men of every race (although not all men will be there, since many will be suffering punishment). Thus – as I had begun to say – 'flesh' is used of the good as well as of the bad, whereas 'members' or 'corpses' are used of the wicked. By this, then, it is made plain that the judgment by which the good and the wicked are to be consigned to their ends will certainly follow the resurrection of the body; and so our faith in this resurrection is thereby strengthened.

22 What is meant by the good going forth to look upon the punishment of the wicked

But in what way are the good to 'go forth' to see the punishment of the wicked? Are they to leave their blessed abodes as by a bodily movement and betake themselves to the place of punishment, so that they may look upon the torments of the wicked in corporeal presence? God forbid! Rather, it is by their knowledge that they will 'go forth'. But the expression signifies that those who are to be tormented will be without. Again, that is why the Lord calls that place of punishment 'the outer darkness',¹⁵⁷ in contrast to the 'entrance' through which the good servant was told to 'Enter into the joy of thy Lord'.¹⁵⁸ He speaks of it in this way lest we should suppose that the wicked enter in so that they may be known. On the contrary, we are to understand that the good go out to them by virtue of their knowledge; for the good are to know that which is without. Those who are undergoing punishment will not know what is happening within, in the joy of the Lord; but those who are in that joy will know what is happening without, in the 'outer darkness'. And so it is said, 'They shall go out', because they will know what is done by those who are without. After all, if, by virtue of the presence of God, however faint, in the minds of mortal men, the prophets were able to know things that had not yet happened,

¹⁵⁷ Matt. 25,30

¹⁵⁸ Matt. 25,21ff.

will not the immortal saints know things that have already happened, when 'God shall be all in all'?¹⁵⁹

The seed of the saints and their name, then, will remain in that blessed state: the seed, that is, of which John says, 'And his seed remaineth in him',¹⁶⁰ and the name of which it was said through Isaiah himself, 'I will give them an everlasting name.'¹⁶¹ 'And there shall be to them month after month, and Sabbath after Sabbath', as if it were said, 'Moon after moon, and rest upon rest'. For the good will have both of these things when they pass from these old shadows of time into the new lights of eternity.

In the punishment of the wicked, however, the fire that is not quenched and the worm that does not die are interpreted in different ways by different authorities. Some, indeed, consider that both refer to the body; others consider that both refer to the soul. Others again consider that the fire refers literally to the body, and the worm figuratively to the soul; and this interpretation seems more credible. But there is no time now to discuss this difference. For we have undertaken to occupy this book with a treatment of the last judgment by which the good are separated from the bad. Their rewards and punishments must be discussed more diligently elsewhere.

23 What Daniel foretold concerning the persecution of Antichrist, the judgment of God, and the reign of the saints

The prophecy of Daniel concerning the last judgment is arranged thus. First, he foretells the coming of Antichrist; then he carries his narrative on to deal with the eternal reign of the saints. He begins with his prophetic vision of the four beasts, signifying four kingdoms, and the fourth of these is vanquished by a certain king who is recognised as Antichrist. After this comes the eternal reign of the Son of Man, who is understood to be Christ. Then Daniel says, 'I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. I came near unto one of them that

¹⁵⁹ 1 Cor. 15,28.

¹⁶⁰ 1 John 3,9.

¹⁶¹ Is. 56,5.

stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of these things.¹⁶²

Daniel then tells us what he heard from the bystander of whom he had inquired concerning these things; and he speaks as if the bystander himself were explaining them to him.

These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever. Then, I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet; and of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.¹⁶³

This, Daniel tells us, is what he asked; and he then goes on to tell us what he heard in reply. 'Thus he said' (that is, the man whom he had asked answered and said)

the fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, Whose kingdom is an everlasting

¹⁶² Dan. 7, 15f.

¹⁶³ Dan. 7, 19ff.

kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him. Here is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart.¹⁶⁴

Some have interpreted these four kingdoms as those of the Assyrians, Persians, Macedonians, and Romans; and if anyone wishes to know whether or not this is a proper interpretation, let him read the Presbyter Jerome's book on Daniel, written with great learning and diligence. Anyone who reads this passage, however, even if he does so in his sleep, can hardly doubt that the reign of Antichrist, with its most savage assaults against the Church, is to be borne, if only for a little season, until by the final judgment of God the saints receive their everlasting kingdom. For it is very clear, from the number of days given in a subsequent passage,¹⁶⁵ that 'a time and times and the dividing of time' means a year, two years, and half a year: that is, three years and a half, though in the Scriptures this is sometimes given in months. For although the words 'times' seems to be an indefinite expression in Latin, the original word is dual in meaning. This is a form which Latin does not have; but Greek does, and so, it is said, does Hebrew. Thus, 'times' here means 'two times'. As for the 'ten kings' – the ten men whom, as it seems, Antichrist is to find when he comes: I am, I confess, afraid that we may be mistaken in this interpretation, and that he may come unexpectedly when there are not ten kings alive in the Roman world. For what if the number ten signifies the total number of kings after whom he is to come, in the same way as totality is often signified by a thousand, or a hundred, or seven, or by several other numbers which it is not here necessary to consider?

In another passage, the same Daniel says,

And there shall be a time of trouble, such as was not seen since there was born a nation upon earth until that time: and in that time all Thy people which shall be found written in the book shall be delivered. And many of them that sleep in the mound of earth shall arise, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting confusion. And they that be wise shall shine as

¹⁶⁴ Dan. 7,23ff.

¹⁶⁵ Dan. 12,11.

the brightness of the firmament; and many of the just as the stars for ever.¹⁶⁶

This passage is very like the one that we have already quoted from the Gospel,¹⁶⁷ at least with regard to the resurrection of the bodies of the dead. For those who, in the Gospel, are said to be 'in the graves' are here said to 'sleep in the mound of earth', or, as others translate it, 'in the dust of the earth'. Again, just as it is said in the Gospel that 'They shall come forth', so here it is said, 'They shall arise.' In the Gospel: 'They that have done good, to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.' Here: 'Some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting confusion.' Whereas the Gospel says, 'All who are in the graves', the prophet does not say 'all' but, 'many of them that sleep in the mound of earth.' But we are not to suppose that this is a discrepancy; for 'many' is sometimes used in the Scriptures in place of 'all'. For instance, it was said to Abraham: 'I have set thee as the father of many nations', but, in another place it says, 'In thy seed shall all nations be blessed.'¹⁶⁸

Concerning such resurrection it is said a little while afterwards to the prophet himself, 'And come thou and rest: for there is yet a day till the completion of the consummation; and thou shalt rest, and rise in thy lot in the end of the days.'¹⁶⁹

24 Passages from the Psalms of David which foretell the end of the world and the last judgment

Many passages in the psalms speak of the last judgment, although for the most part they do so in passing and briefly. But I shall by no means pass over in silence what is most clearly said there concerning the end of this world.

In the beginning hast Thou laid the foundations of the earth,
O Lord; and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They
shall perish, but Thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax
old like a garment; and as a vesture Thou shalt change them,

¹⁶⁶ Dan. 12,3ff.

¹⁶⁷ John 5,28f, cf. Ch. 6.

¹⁶⁸ Gen. 17,5; 22,18.

¹⁶⁹ Dan. 12,13.

and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail.¹⁷⁰

Porphiry praises the Hebrews for their piety in worshipping a God who is great and true and terrible even to the gods themselves.¹⁷¹ Why, then, does he follow the oracles of those gods in charging the Christians with immense folly because they say that this world is to perish? Behold what is said in the godly writings of the Hebrews to that God Whom, as even so distinguished a philosopher confesses, the gods themselves regard with dread: 'The heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish.' When the heavens, which are the higher and more firmly established parts of the world, perish, shall the world itself not perish? This statement is displeasing to Jupiter, whose oracle is cited in the writings of Porphiry as a most weighty authority when he reproaches the Christians for their credulity. Why, then, does he not similarly reproach the wisdom of the Hebrews, as being folly? For it is in their most sacred books that the statement is found: it is in this Hebrew wisdom itself that we read that the heavens are to perish; yet Porphiry is so greatly pleased by such wisdom that he proclaims it even through the utterances of his own gods! Why, then, does he commit so vain an error as to detest the faith of the Christians at least partly, if not entirely, because they believe that the world will perish? For, surely, if the heavens are to perish, the world must perish also. Again, in those sacred writings which are peculiar to ourselves, and which we do not share with the Hebrews – that is, in the Gospels and the apostolic books – we read, 'The figure of this world passeth away.'¹⁷² We also read, 'The world passeth away',¹⁷³ and 'Heaven and earth shall pass away.'¹⁷⁴ I suppose, though, that 'it shall pass away' or 'they shall pass away' are somewhat milder statements than 'they shall perish'.

In the Epistle of the apostle Peter, also, where it is said that, 'The world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished', it is clear enough what part of the world is signified by the whole, and to what extent it is said to have perished. It is clear also what heavens 'are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of

¹⁷⁰ Psalm 102,25ff.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Bk XIX,23.

¹⁷² 1 Cor. 7,31.

¹⁷³ 1 John 2,17.

¹⁷⁴ Matt. 24,35.

judgment and perdition of ungodly men'. Then he says, a little later, 'The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.' And he adds, 'Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be?'¹⁷⁵ Now these heavens which are to perish may be understood as being the same as those which he said 'are kept in store, reserved unto fire'. Again, the elements which are to 'melt with fervent heat' may be taken to be those stormy, turbulent elements in this lowest part of the world, in which, he said, those same heavens are kept in store. For the higher heavens, in whose firmament the stars are established, will remain in all their completeness. Indeed, it is written that 'the stars shall fall from heaven';¹⁷⁶ and – leaving aside the fact that it is, as it happens, much more plausible to take these words in a different way – this in itself shows that the heavens themselves will remain, if the stars are to fall from them. This statement is, then, either figurative – which is the more probable explanation – or else it depicts something which is to occur in this lowest heaven: something more wondrous than anything which happens now, like the star in Virgil which 'Trailed its torch behind it with a great light', and 'hid itself in the woods of Ida'.¹⁷⁷

The passage which I have quoted from the psalm, however, seems to exclude no part of the heavens from the coming destruction. For it says, 'The heavens are the works of Thy hands: they shall perish.' Thus, since there is no part of them which is not a work of God, there is no part of them which will escape destruction. But our adversaries will not stoop to defend the piety of the Hebrews, approved by the oracles of their own gods, by citing the words of the apostle Peter, for they vehemently hate him. They might, indeed, avoid having to believe that the whole world is to perish by understanding that, when the psalmist says, 'They shall perish', the whole here stands for a part, because only the lowest heavens are to perish. But this is in keeping with what the apostle says in his epistle, when he speaks of 'the world' perishing in the flood; for he too uses the whole to signify a part: that is, the lowest part, with

¹⁷⁵ 2 Pet. 3,6ff.

¹⁷⁶ Matt. 24,29.

¹⁷⁷ *Aen.*, 2,694; 696.

its corresponding region of the heavens. And, as I said, our adversaries will not stoop to reason in this way, for fear of seeming to approve of Peter's meaning. They do not wish to ascribe as much importance to the final conflagration as we ascribe to the Flood; for they contend that no waters or flames could destroy the whole of the human race. All that remains for them, therefore, is to say that their gods praised the wisdom of the Hebrews because they had not read this psalm!

Again, we are to understand what is said in Psalm 50 as a reference to the last judgment of God: 'God shall come manifestly, our God, and shall not keep silence: fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. He shall call the heaven above, and the earth, to judge His people. Gather His saints together unto Him; they who make a covenant with Him over sacrifices.'¹⁷⁸ We understand this to refer to our Lord Jesus Christ, for Whom we wait in hope, and Who will come from heaven to judge the living and the dead. For He 'shall come manifestly' to judge justly the just and the unjust, Who first came secretly, to be judged unjustly by the unjust. He, I say, 'shall come manifestly' and 'shall not keep silence': that is, He will make Himself known by the voice of His judgment, Who, when He first came secretly, was silent before His judge. As we read that it was prophesied of Him by Isaiah, and as we see fulfilled in the Gospel, He was 'brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth'.¹⁷⁹ As for the 'fire' and 'tempest', we have already explained how these words are to be understood when we dealt with a similar passage in the prophecy of Isaiah. And as for 'He shall call the heaven above', the saints and the just are rightly called 'heaven', and so there is no doubt that the meaning here is the same as the apostle's when he says, 'We shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air'.¹⁸⁰ After all, if we take these words according to their literal sense, how is it possible to 'call the heaven above', as if the heaven could be anywhere else than above? And as for the words which come next, 'And the earth to judge His people', if we take this with 'He shall call' – that is 'He shall call the earth also' – without here supplying

¹⁷⁸ Psalm 50,3ff.

¹⁷⁹ Is. 53.7.

¹⁸⁰ 1 Thess. 4,17; cf. Ch. 20.

the word 'above', this seems to give a meaning in accordance with right faith. For 'the heaven' signifies those who will judge along with Christ, and 'the earth' those who shall be judged. Thus the words 'He shall call the heaven above' would not here mean, 'He shall catch up into the air', but 'He shall lift up to seats of judgment.' Again, 'He shall call the heaven' may mean, 'He shall call the angels in their lofty and exalted places, that He may descend with them to do judgment'; and 'He shall call the earth also' would then mean, 'He shall call the men of the earth to judgment.' But if we take the words 'and the earth' with both 'He shall call' and 'above', so that the sense is then 'He shall call the heaven above, and He shall call the earth above also'; then, in this case, I think that the passage is best understood of those who are to be caught up to meet Christ in the air. According to this interpretation, they are called 'the heaven' with reference to their souls, and 'the earth' with reference to their bodies.

Next, what is 'to judge His people', but to separate by judgment the good from the bad, like sheep from the goats? Then, He turns to the angels, to speak to them: 'Gather His saints together unto Him'; for a matter of such importance must surely be carried out by the ministry of angels. And if we ask who the saints are who are to be gathered together unto Him by the angels, the psalm says, 'They who make a covenant with Him over sacrifices.' This is the whole life of the righteous, to make a covenant with God over sacrifices. Here, 'over sacrifices' may mean that works of mercy stand above sacrifices in the judgment of God, Who says, 'I desire mercy more than sacrifices.'¹⁸¹ Alternatively, 'over sacrifices' may mean 'in sacrifices', in the same way that something which is certainly done 'in' the world is said to be done 'upon' earth. And, in this case, those very works of mercy are the sacrifices with which God is pleased, as I remember having said in the tenth book of this work.¹⁸² In these works of mercy the righteous make a covenant with God, because they do them for the sake of the promises contained in His new covenant. Thus, when the saints have been gathered unto Him and placed at His right hand in the last judgment, Christ will say, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for

¹⁸¹ Hos. 6,6.

¹⁸² Cf. Bk x,6.

you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat',¹⁸³ and so on, reciting the good works of the good and the everlasting rewards bestowed upon them by the final sentence of the Judge.

25 Of the prophecy of Malachi, in which he speaks of the last judgment, and of the cleansing which some are to undergo by means of purifying punishments

The prophet Malachiel or Malachi, who is also called 'Angel', is thought by some to be Ezra the priest (for Jerome says that this is the opinion of the Hebrews), some of whose other writings have been received into the canon.¹⁸⁴ He prophesies the last judgment, saying:

Behold, He cometh, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap. And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years. And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts. For I am the Lord; I change not.¹⁸⁵

From these words, it seems to be quite clear that, when the judgment comes, some are to suffer a certain kind of purgatorial punishment. For what else are we to understand by the words, 'But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap. And

¹⁸³ Matt. 25,34.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Jerome, *Praefatio in Malachiam* (Biblia Sacra, vol. xvii, Rome, 1987); the 'other writings' here referred to are the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

¹⁸⁵ Mal. 3,1ff.

he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver'? Isaiah says something of the same kind: 'The Lord shall wash the filthiness of the sons and daughters of Zion, and shall cleanse away the blood from their midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning.'¹⁸⁶

Unless we might say perhaps that they are cleansed from their filthiness and in a certain sense purified when the wicked are separated from them by the penal judgment. In this case, the segregation and damnation of the wicked is the purgation of the good, because they will henceforth live without having to mingle with such men. But the prophet then speaks as follows: 'And He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasing unto the Lord.' Here, surely, he shows us that those who have been purged will then be 'pleasing unto the Lord' by reason of their 'offering in righteousness', and consequently that they themselves will be purged of their own unrighteousness which rendered them displeasing to God. Indeed, when they have been purged, they themselves will be offerings of full and perfect righteousness; for what more acceptable offering can such persons make to God than themselves? But this question of purgatorial punishments we must defer to another time, so that we may then consider it more diligently.

As for 'the sons of Levi' and 'Judah and Jerusalem': we should understand these names as signifying the Church herself, gathered in, not from the Hebrews only, but from the other nations also. Not the Church as she is now, however, when 'if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us'.¹⁸⁷ Rather, they signify the Church as she will be then, purified by the last judgment as a threshing floor is by the winnower, and when those of her members who need such purification have been cleansed by fire, so that no one at all remains who must still offer sacrifice for his sins. For all who make such offerings are, clearly, still in their sins: it is precisely for their sins that they make their offering, so that, having made to God an acceptable offering, their sins may then be forgiven them.

¹⁸⁶ Is. 4.4.

¹⁸⁷ 1 John 1.8.

26 Of the sacrifices offered to God by the saints,
which are to be 'pleasant unto the Lord, as in the
days of old, and as in former years'

And it was because God wished to show that His City will not then continue to observe the custom of sacrifice that He said that the sons of Levi will offer sacrifices 'in righteousness'. They will not, that is, offer them in sin, and so they will not offer them for sin. Thus, we can understand what is meant by what the prophet says next: 'Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years.' On the strength of these words, the Jews promise themselves a return of the past times of their sacrifices according to the Law of the old covenant; but they do so in vain. For it was not in righteousness that they offered sacrifices then, but in sin. Indeed, it was especially and primarily for sins that they offered them then, even to the extent that the priest himself, whom we must believe to have been more righteous than the rest, was accustomed to offer, according to God's commandments, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people. It is necessary, therefore, to explain how we are to take the words, 'as in the days of old, and as in former years'. For perhaps the prophet here has in mind the time when the first human beings were in Paradise. Then, indeed, pure and wholly free from all stain and blemish of sin, they offered themselves to God as the purest sacrifices. But they were banished from that place because of their transgression, and human nature was condemned in them, with the exception of the one Mediator and those who have been baptised and are as yet infants. Now, therefore, 'There is none clean from stain, not even the babe whose life has been but a day upon the earth.'¹⁸⁸ Perhaps it will be replied that those who offer in faith may properly be said to offer in righteousness, because the righteous man lives by faith.¹⁸⁹ But, then again, whoever says that he has no sin deceives himself; and so the righteous man does not say so, precisely because he lives by faith. Also, will any man say that this present time of faith is to be placed on an equal footing with that final state when those who offer sacrifices in righteousness will be cleansed by the fire of the last judgment? For we must believe that,

¹⁸⁸ Job 14,4.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Rom. 1,17.

after such cleansing, the righteous will have no sin. As far as the absence of sin is concerned, therefore, it is clear that the time after the last judgment can be compared only to that time when the first human beings lived in Paradise before their transgression, in the felicity of complete innocence. It is in this way, then, that we are rightly to understand the meaning of the words 'as in the days of old, and as in former years'.

Isaiah also, after the promise of the new heavens and the new earth, furnishes some allegorical and mysterious descriptions of the blessedness of the saints. My own desire to avoid undue length forbids me from giving a proper explanation of these descriptions; but, among other things, he says: 'According to the days of the tree of life shall be the days of my people.'¹⁹⁰ Now is there anyone who has even glanced at the sacred writings who does not know where God planted the tree of life, from whose fruit he cut off the first human beings when their own iniquity expelled them from Paradise, and which He guarded by means of a flaming sword which turned every way?

But someone may contend that the 'days of the tree of life' of which the prophet Isaiah speaks are the present times of the Church of Christ, and that Christ Himself is prophetically called the tree of life because He is the Wisdom of God, of which Solomon says, 'It is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon it.'¹⁹¹ Someone may maintain also that the first human beings did not spend 'years' in Paradise, but were expelled from it so soon that none of their children were begotten there. On this view, then, the words 'as in the days of old, and as in former years' cannot refer to the time spent by the first human beings in Paradise. This, however, is a question which I pass over; for it would be tedious to discuss every detail simply in order to establish the manifest truth of a single point. For I see another meaning which will prevent us from believing that the prophet is here promising us, as a great blessing, a return to the carnal sacrifices of the Old Law 'as in the days of old, and as in former years'. For it was commanded under the old Law that the animals chosen as victims were to be immaculate and entirely free from blemish. This was because they signified holy men, free from all sin; but only one such man, Christ, has ever yet been found. At

¹⁹⁰ Is. 65,22.

¹⁹¹ Prov. 3,18.

the judgment, however, those who are worthy of such purification will be purified even by fire; and, thereafter, there will be found in all the saints no sin at all. In this condition, then, they will offer themselves in righteousness, as victims in every way immaculate and without any blemish. Thus, they will indeed be 'as in the days of old, and as in former years', when the purest victims were offered as a foreshadowing of this state of things to come. For, then, there will be in the flesh and minds of the saints that purity which was prefigured in the bodies of those victims.

Next, God speaks to those who are worthy not of purification, but of damnation. 'And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers.' After enumerating other crimes worthy of damnation, He then adds, 'For I am the Lord, I change not.' It is as if He said, 'Though your fault has changed you for the worse, and my grace has changed you for the better, I change not.' He says that He will be a 'witness' Himself because in His judgment He has no need of other witnesses. Again, He will be 'swift' either because He will come quickly and His judgment, which had seemed so slow in coming, will be most swift in its unexpected coming; or because He will convict the consciences of men without any lengthy preliminaries. For, as it is written, 'In the thoughts of the wicked shall interrogation be made.'¹⁹² And the apostle says, 'The thoughts accusing or else excusing, in the day in which God shall judge the hidden things of men, according to my gospel in Jesus Christ'.¹⁹³ It is in this way, then, that we are to understand that the Lord 'will be a swift witness'; for He will suddenly recall into the memory that which will convict and punish the conscience.

27 Of the separation of the good from the bad, by which the distinction established at the last judgment will be made manifest

There is another passage from the prophet Malachi pertaining to the last judgment: a passage which I have already quoted in another context, in the eighteenth book.¹⁹⁴ He says:

¹⁹² Wisd. 1,9.

¹⁹³ Rom. 2,15f.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Bk xviii,35.

And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not. For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts.¹⁹⁵

Under the sun which shines on the vanity of this life, we do not discern the gulf that separates rewards from punishments and the righteous from the unrighteous. But when this gulf is brought to light under that Sun of righteousness in the brightness of life eternal, then there will indeed be a judgment such as there has never before been.

28 That the law of Moses must be understood in a spiritual sense, thereby excluding the damnable murmurs of a carnal interpretation

Next, the same prophet adds the following words: 'Remember ye the Law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel.'¹⁹⁶ This mention by the prophet of precepts and statutes is timely, following as it does the declaration of the great separation that is to be made between those who keep the Law and those who despise it. At the same time, the prophet intends that men should learn to interpret the Law in a spiritual sense and find Christ in it, since it is by the judgment of Christ that the separation of the good from the bad is to be made. For it is not for nothing that the Lord Himself said to the Jews, 'Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me.'¹⁹⁷ But

¹⁹⁵ Mal. 3,17ff.

¹⁹⁶ Mai. 4,4.

¹⁹⁷ John 5,46.

because they received the Law in a carnal way, and because they did not understand that its earthly promises are symbols of what is to be fulfilled in heaven, the Jews made haste to complain, even daring to say: 'It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up.'¹⁹⁸ It was these words of theirs which, in a certain sense, compelled the prophet to foretell the last judgment. For, then, the wicked will not be happy even in appearance, but will very clearly be utterly wretched; and the good will not be oppressed even with a passing misery, but will enjoy bright and everlasting blessedness. For the prophet had earlier cited some similar complaints, of those who said, 'Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and such are pleasing to Him.'¹⁹⁹ These people were, I say, led to make such complaints against God because they took the Law of Moses in a carnal sense. So too, the author of Psalm 73 says that his feet were almost gone, his steps had well nigh slipped, because he was envious of the foolish, when he saw the prosperity of the wicked. Thus, he says, among other things, 'How doth God know? And is there knowledge in the most High?' And again, 'Have I cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency?' The psalmist says that the labour of solving this most difficult question, posed by the fact that the good seem to be wretched and the wicked happy, 'was too painful for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end'.²⁰⁰ For in the last judgment, indeed, things shall not be thus. On the contrary, in the manifest wretchedness of the wicked and the manifest felicity of the righteous, a state of things very different from that which now prevails will appear.

29 Of the coming of Elijah before the judgment, so
that the Jews may be converted to Christ by his
preaching and exposition of the Scriptures

Malachi, then, admonishes the people to remember the Law of Moses (for he foresaw that, for a long time to come, they would not

¹⁹⁸ Mal. 3.14f.

¹⁹⁹ Mal. 2.17.

²⁰⁰ Psalm 73,3ff.

understand it as they should, in a spiritual sense); and he then goes on to say: 'And behold, I will send you Elijah the Tishbite before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the father to the child, and the heart of a man to his neighbour, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.'²⁰¹ It is a belief frequently present in the speech and hearts of the faithful that, in the last time, before the judgment, the great and wondrous prophet Elijah will expound the Law to the Jews, who will thereby come to believe in the true Christ: that is, in our Christ. And it is not without reason that we hope that, before the coming of our Judge and Saviour, Elijah will come. Indeed, it is not without reason that we believe him to be still alive; for Holy Scripture attests most plainly that he was caught up out of this life in a chariot of fire.²⁰² When he comes, therefore, he will give a spiritual interpretation of the Law which the Jews now understand only in a carnal sense, and thus he will 'turn the heart of the father to the child': that is, the heart of the fathers to their children; for the translators of the Septuagint have here used the singular instead of the plural. The meaning of this is that the children, that is, the Jews, shall understand the Law as their fathers – that is, the prophets, and, among them, Moses himself – understood it. For the heart of the fathers will be turned to their children when the children are brought to understand the Law as their fathers understood it; and the heart of the children will be turned to their fathers when the children come to share the beliefs of their fathers. The Septuagint says, 'and the heart of a man to his neighbour' because, clearly, fathers and children are neighbours to each other.

But there is another and preferable sense to be found in the words of the Septuagint translators, who have translated in a spirit of prophecy: namely, that Elijah shall turn the heart of God the Father to the Son. He will do this not, certainly, by causing the Father to love the Son, but by teaching men that the Father loves the Son, so that the Jews also, who at first hated the Son, will love this same Son, Who is our Christ. For the Jews believe that God has His heart turned away from our Christ: this is what they now suppose. And they will come to believe that God's heart is turned towards

²⁰¹ Mal. 4,5f.

²⁰² Cf. 2 Kings 2,11.

the Son only when their own hearts have turned towards Him by conversion, and they have learnt the love of the Father for the Son.

As to the words which follow, 'And the heart of a man to his neighbour' – that is, Elijah will also turn the heart of a man to his neighbour: how can we better understand this than as the turning of the heart of a man to the Man Christ? For though, 'being in the form of God', He is our God, yet, taking upon Himself 'the form of a servant',²⁰³ He humbled Himself to become our neighbour. This, then, is what Elijah will do, 'lest I come and smite the earth with a curse'. For 'the earth' here refers to those who love the things of this earth; and such, down to this present time, are the carnal Jews, which is why they have come to murmur against God as they do, saying, 'Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord', and 'It is vain to serve God.'

30 In certain passages in the books of the Old Testament where it is said that God will judge the earth, it is clear from what the Lord God says that Christ is meant, even though the person of Christ is not explicitly mentioned

There are many other passages of Divine Scripture which bear witness to the last judgment of God; but it would take far too long if I were to collect them all. Let it suffice, therefore, to have proved that both the New Testament and the Old foretell this last judgment. What is not so clearly stated in the Old Testament as in the New, however, is that this judgment is to be administered by Christ: that is, that Christ is to come down from Heaven as judge. And this is because when, in the Old Testament, the Lord God says that He will come, or it is said of the Lord God that He will come, we do not necessarily understand this to be a reference to Christ. For 'the Lord God' can mean the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit.

This is a question which we must not leave undiscussed. In the first place, we must show how Jesus Christ speaks in the prophetic books under the title of the Lord God while leaving us in no doubt that it is indeed Jesus Christ Who is speaking. Having done this, we shall then be able to understand that Christ is meant in other

²⁰³ Phil. 2,7.

passages also when it is said that 'the Lord God' will come to that last judgment, even though this may not be immediately clear.

There is a passage in the prophet Isaiah which clearly illustrates what I am saying. For God says by the prophet,

Hear me, Jacob and Israel, whom I call. I am the first, and I am for ever: and my hand has founded the earth, and my right hand has established the heaven. I will call them, and they shall stand together, and be gathered and hear. Who has declared to them these things? In love of thee I have done thy pleasure upon Babylon, that I might take away the seed of the Chaldeans. I have spoken, and I have called: I have brought him, and have made his way prosperous. Come ye near unto me, and hear this. I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; when they were made, there was I. And now the Lord God and His Spirit hath sent me.²⁰⁴

It is certainly Christ Himself Who is speaking here as the Lord God; yet we should not have understood that it was Jesus Christ had He not added, 'And now the Lord God and His Spirit hath sent me.' For He said this according to 'the form of a servant', using the past tense to signify a future reality; a usage which we find elsewhere in the same prophet, where we read, 'He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter' rather than 'He shall be brought.' The past tense is used to indicate what is to happen in the future; and prophecy often speaks in this way.

There is another passage in Zechariah which plainly shows that the Almighty has sent the Almighty; and what can this mean, if not that God the Father has sent God the Son? For it is written, 'Thus saith the Lord Almighty, After the glory hath He sent me unto the nations which spoiled you; for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye. Behold, I will bring mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the Lord Almighty hath sent me.'²⁰⁵ Behold: the Lord Almighty says that the Lord Almighty has sent Him. Who will dare to understand these words as referring to any other than Christ: to Christ, that is, Who is speaking to the lost sheep of the house of Israel? For He says in the Gospel, 'I am not sent save to the lost sheep of the house

²⁰⁴ Is. 48, 12ff.

²⁰⁵ Zech. 2, 8f.

of Israel',²⁰⁶ whom He here compares to the apple of God's eye, in order to show God's most excellent love for them; and to this order of sheep the apostles themselves belonged. But after the glory – of His resurrection, that is (for before the resurrection, as the evangelist says, 'Jesus was not yet glorified')²⁰⁷ – He was sent unto the Gentiles also, in the persons of His apostles; and thus was fulfilled what is said in the psalm: 'Thou wilt deliver me from the contradictions of the people; Thou wilt set me as the head of the Gentiles.'²⁰⁸ Thus, those who had 'spoiled' the Israelites, those whom the Israelites had served when they were subject to the Gentiles, were not merely to be spoiled in their turn, but were themselves to become the spoil of the Israelites. (For this had been promised to the apostles when Christ said, 'I will make you fishers of men';²⁰⁹ and He said to one of them, 'From henceforth thou shalt catch men'.)²¹⁰ They did indeed become a spoil, therefore, but for their own good, like property taken away from that 'strong man' when he is bound by a stronger.²¹¹

Again, the Lord speaks through the same prophet, saying:

And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and mercy; and they shall look upon me because they have insulted me, and they shall mourn for Him as for one very dear, and shall be in bitterness as for an only-begotten.²¹²

Now who else but God has it in His power to destroy all the nations which are hostile to the holy city Jerusalem: which 'come against' her, that is, are opposed to her, or, as others translate it, 'come upon her', as if subjecting her to them? Or who else can 'pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and mercy?' Clearly, these things lie within the power of God, and it is in the person of God that the prophet speaks. Yet

²⁰⁶ Matt. 15, 24.

²⁰⁷ John 7, 39.

²⁰⁸ Psalm 18, 43.

²⁰⁹ Matt. 4, 19.

²¹⁰ Luke 5, 10.

²¹¹ Matt. 12, 29; cf. Ch. 7.

²¹² Zech. 12, 9f.

Christ shows that He Himself is the God Who does these so great and divine things, when He goes on to say, 'And they shall look upon me because they have insulted me, and they shall mourn for Him as for one very dear, and shall be in bitterness as for an only-begotten.' For in that day, when they see Him coming in His majesty, and when they know that it is He Whom they insulted in the person of their forebears when He first came in His humility, the Jews will repent of insulting Him in His passion. Or this is, at any rate, true of those Jews who are to receive the spirit of grace and mercy. Their forebears themselves, the authors of this great impiety, will see Him when they rise again; but this will be for their punishment, and not for their correction. It is not of them that we are to understand that passage where it is said, 'And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and mercy, and they shall look upon me because they have insulted me.' Rather, we are to understand this to apply to their descendants, who will at that time believe through Elijah. But just as we say to the Jews, 'You slew Christ', though it was their forebears who did so, so the Jews of that time will grieve because, in a certain sense, they did what their forefathers did, from whose stock they are descended. Although, therefore, those who receive the spirit of grace and mercy will not be damned with their ungodly progenitors, they will nonetheless grieve as if they themselves had done what their forebears did. Their grief, then, will arise not from guilt, but from pious affection.

To be sure, where the translators of the Septuagint have said, 'They shall look upon me because they insulted me', the Hebrew has, 'They shall look upon me whom they pierced.' And by this word 'pierced' the crucifixion of Christ is indeed indicated more clearly. But the translators of the Septuagint preferred to refer to the insult which was never absent throughout His whole passion. For the Jews insulted Him when He was seized and bound; when he was judged; when He was mocked by the robe in which they dressed Him; when, laughing, they adored Him on bended knee; when He was crowned with thorns and struck upon the head with a rod; when He bore His cross; and when, at last, He hung upon the tree. And therefore we recognise the truth of the Lord's passion more fully when we do not follow the one interpretation only, but unite both, and read both 'insulted' and 'pierced'.

When, therefore, we read in the prophetic writings that God will come to execute the last judgment, we must take this to mean that Christ will come. We must understand this from the mere mention of the judgment, and even though there is no other indication. For though the Father will judge, He will judge by the coming of the Son of man. The Father Himself, in His own manifest presence, 'judges no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son';²¹³ for as the Son was judged as a man, so shall He be made manifest as a man to do judgment. For of Whom but the Son does God speak through Isaiah under the name of Jacob and Israel, of whose seed Christ received a body? It is written:

Jacob is my servant, I will uphold Him; Israel is mine elect, my Spirit has assumed Him: I have put my Spirit upon Him; He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor cease, neither shall His voice be heard without. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: but in truth shall He bring forth judgment. He shall shine and shall not be broken, until He sets judgment in the earth: and the nations shall hope in His name.²¹⁴

In the Hebrew, 'Jacob' and 'Israel' are not found, but simply 'my servant'. But the translators of the Septuagint no doubt wished to warn us that 'my servant' is to be understood as a reference to 'the form of a servant' in which the Most High humbled Himself. And this is why they here inserted the name of that man from whose stock Christ took the form of a servant.

The Holy Spirit was given to Him, and was made manifest, as the Gospel attests, in the form of a dove.²¹⁵ He brought forth judgment to the Gentiles, because He foretold the coming judgment, which had been hidden from the Gentiles. In His meekness He did not cry, not did He cease to proclaim the truth. But His voice was not heard, nor is it heard, without, because he is not obeyed by those Who are outside His body. The Jews themselves, who persecuted Him, He did not break, even though, as a bruised reed, they had lost their wholeness; nor did He quench them, even though, as a smoking flax, they had lost their light. For He spared them, having

²¹³ John 5,22.

²¹⁴ Is. 42,1ff (I.XX).

²¹⁵ Matt. 3,16.

come to be judged by them, and not yet to judge them. He brought forth judgment in truth when He proclaimed to them that that they would be punished if they persisted in their wickedness. His face shone on the mount,²¹⁶ and His fame in the world. He is not broken nor overcome, because neither in Himself nor in His Church has He yielded to His persecutors so as to cease to be. And so that of which His enemies have spoken, or still speak, has not come to pass: 'When shall he die, and His name perish?'²¹⁷ Nor shall it come to pass 'until He set judgment in the earth'.

Behold, then: the hidden thing which we sought is now revealed. For this is the last judgment which Christ will set in the earth when He comes from heaven. And it is in Him too that we already see the final words of the prophecy fulfilled: 'In Him shall the nations hope.' By this fulfilment, which no one can deny, let that be believed which our adversaries most shamelessly deny. For who could have hoped for that which even those who still refuse to believe in Christ now see fulfilled among us, and which is so undeniable that they can but 'gnash their teeth and pine away'?²¹⁸ Who, I say, could have hoped that the nations would hope in the name of Christ, when He was seized, bound, scourged, mocked, crucified: when even the disciples themselves had lost the hope which they had begun to have in Him? The hope which was then held by hardly more than the one thief upon the cross is now the hope of the nations throughout the length and breadth of the world: of those who are marked with the sign of the Cross upon which He died, that they might not die eternally.

The last judgment, then, as foretold in the Holy Scriptures, is to be executed by Jesus Christ; and no one denies or doubts this apart from those who, through I know not what unbelievable animosity or blindness, refuse to believe these Scriptures, even though their truth has by now been demonstrated to all the world. At that judgment, or near the time of that judgment, we have learned that the following things will come to pass: Elijah the Tishbite will come; the Jews will believe; Antichrist will persecute; Christ will judge; the dead will rise; the good will be separated from the wicked; the

²¹⁶ Matt. 17,2.

²¹⁷ Psalm 41,5.

²¹⁸ Psalm 112,10.

world will be destroyed by fire and renewed. We must believe that all these things will come to pass. But how and in what order they are to do so we shall learn by experience of the events themselves when the time comes. This is something that, at the present time, the human intellect cannot manage to teach us. My own belief, however, is that they will happen in the order in which I have here stated them.

Two more books pertinent to our task remain to be written before, with God's help, my promise is fulfilled. One of these will deal with the punishment of the wicked, and the other with the happiness of the righteous. In them, I shall try, to the utmost of the power which God has given me, to refute the human arguments by which certain wretches are seen to gnaw away at the divine prophecies and promises, and to deride, as false and laughable, those doctrines which are the wholesome nourishment of the faith. Those, on the other hand, who are wise according to God hold the truth and omnipotence of God to be the strongest possible argument in favour of those things which seem incredible to men, yet which are contained in the Holy Scriptures whose truth has now been proved in so many ways. For they are certain that God can in no way lie, and that he can do what to the unbeliever is impossible.

Book XXI

1 Of the order of the discussion, which requires that we speak first of the eternal punishment of the lost in company with the devil, and then of the eternal blessedness of the saints

We come next to the nature of the punishment which is to be visited upon the devil and all who belong to him when the two cities – the City of God and the city of the devil – have reached their deserved ends through Jesus Christ our Lord, the Judge of the living and dead. I shall in this book discuss this question more diligently, as far as God's help enables me to do so.

I have adopted this order, and preferred to deal with the felicity of the saints later, because, though both the saved and the damned will then be united with their bodies, it seems more incredible that bodies will endure in everlasting torments than that they will remain without any pain in eternal blessedness. Thus, when I have demonstrated that such punishment ought not to be thought unbelievable, this will be of great help to me; for it will make it easier to believe in the immortality of the bodies of the saints, which are delivered from all pain.

Moreover, this order is not at variance with the divine writings. For, in such writings, the blessedness of the good is sometimes put first, as in the words, 'They that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.'¹ But sometimes it is put second, as in 'The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things which offend, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of His Father.'² And again, 'These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.'³ So too, the prophets adopt now the one order and now the other. It would take too long to cite instances here; but anyone who consults them will see that this is so. And

¹ John 5,29.

² Matt. 13,41ff.

³ Matt. 25,46.

I have already given my own reason for the order which I have followed.

2 Whether it is possible for a material body to endure for ever in a burning fire

What evidence, then, can I show to convince those who will not believe that human bodies, animate and living, can not only survive death, but can also endure the torments of everlasting fire? Our adversaries refuse to allow us merely to attribute this to the power of the Almighty. They demand that we persuade them by some example. We may reply that there are animals which are certainly corruptible, because mortal, yet which live in the midst of flames. Again, there is a species of worm found in springs of water so hot that no one can put his hand into it without injury: a species which not only lives there without any injury to itself, but which cannot live anywhere else. Yet if we say these things, they either refuse to believe us unless we can show them instances; or, if we are able to prove them by ocular demonstration or by reliable testimony, they contend, with the same unbelief, that these are not examples of what we seek to prove: for these animals do not live for ever, and, moreover, they live in that great heat without pain, because the element of fire is suitable to their nature and causes it to thrive rather than suffer. Surely, however, it is more incredible that it should thrive in such circumstances than that it should suffer. It is amazing that anything should suffer in fire and yet live, but more amazing still that it should live in fire and not suffer. If, then, the latter is believed, why not the former also?

3 Whether a fleshly body can endure eternal pain

But, they say, there is no body which can suffer yet which cannot die.⁴ How do we know this? For who is certain that it is not in their bodies that the demons suffer when they confess that they are tormented with great pain?⁵ And if it is replied that there is no earthly body – that is, no solid and perceptible body; to put it in a

⁴ Cf. Cicero, *De nat. deor.*, 3,13,32.

⁵ Cf. Matt. 8,29.

word, no flesh – which can suffer and cannot die: is this not to tell us only what men have gathered from experience and their bodily senses? For they know nothing of any flesh which is not mortal; and this is the whole extent of their reasoning: that what they have had no experience of they simply judge to be impossible. But we cannot call it reasoning to make pain a proof of death, when, in fact, it is rather a sign of life. We may, indeed, ask whether that which suffers can live for ever; yet it is certain that everything which suffers pain is alive, and that pain can be present only in a living creature. It is necessarily true, therefore, that he who is in pain is alive; but it is not inevitable that pain should kill the sufferer, for pain does not in every case kill even those mortal bodies of ours which are to die in any case. And that any pain can kill them is caused by the fact that the soul is connected to the body in such a way that, when extreme pain comes, the soul yields to such pain and withdraws. For the composition of our members and vital parts is so infirm that it cannot withstand that force which gives rise to great or extreme pain. But in the life to come, body and soul will be connected in such a way that, just as the bond between them will not be dissolved by any length of time, so also it will not be severed by any pain. Thus, although there is at the present time no flesh which can suffer pain and yet cannot die, nonetheless, in the world to come, there will be such flesh as now there is not. For death will not then be nothing; rather, it will be everlasting, since the soul will neither be able to possess God and live, nor to die and escape the pains of the body. The first death expels the soul from the body against its will. The second death holds the soul in the body against its will.⁶ The two deaths have in common the fact that the soul suffers against its will because of its connexion with the body.

Those who argue against us fix their attention upon the fact that there is in this world no flesh which can suffer pain but which cannot die. But they pay no attention to the fact that there exists something greater than the body. For the soul, whose presence animates and rules the body, can suffer pain while being at the same time unable to die. Behold, then: here is something which, though it can have the sensation of pain, is immortal. And this character-

⁶ Cf. Bk XIII, 2; Augustine, *De Trin.*, 4, 5, 3; *Contra Julian.*, 6, 31, 36.

istic, which we know to be present in the souls of all men now, will in time to come also be present in the bodies of the damned. Moreover, if we consider the matter more diligently, we shall see that what is called bodily pain really pertains to the soul. For it is the soul, not the body, which feels pain, even when the pain arises in the body; for the soul feels pain at the place where the body is injured. Thus, just as we speak of bodies feeling and living, though the feeling and life of the body comes from the soul, so also do we speak of bodies suffering pain, though no pain can exist in the body apart from the soul. The soul, then, suffers pain with the body in that place where something occurs to hurt it; and it suffers pain alone, though it be in the body, when some invisible cause distresses it while the body remains uninjured. It suffers even when not established in a body; for the rich man was certainly suffering in hell when he said, 'I am tormented in this flame.'⁷ But the body suffers no pain when it is without the soul; and even when the soul is present, the body cannot suffer other than through the soul. If, therefore, we were right to infer the existence of death from the existence of pain, and to conclude that where pain can be felt death can occur, death would in that case belong more to the soul than to the body, since pain belongs more to the soul than to the body. But since it is in fact true that that which suffers most cannot die, what reason have we for believing that the bodies of the damned, because they will suffer, will therefore also die? The Platonists indeed said that these earthly bodies and dying members give rise to the fears, desires, griefs and joys of the soul. 'Hence', says Virgil – that is, from these earthly bodies and dying members – 'come desire and fear, gladness and sorrow'.⁸ But we have proved to the Platonists in the fourteenth book of this work⁹ that, according to their own argument, souls, even when cleansed from all pollution of the body, are still possessed by a fatal desire to return again into bodies. And where desire can exist, certainly pain can also exist; for desire frustrated, either by not attaining what it seeks or by losing what it has attained, is turned into pain. If, therefore, the soul, which is either the only or the principal sufferer of pain, has a kind of immortality

⁷ Luke 16,24.

⁸ *Aen.*, 6,733.

⁹ The manuscripts universally say *in duodecimo huius operis libro* – in the *twelfth* book of this work; but the reference is clearly to Bk XIV,3 and 5.

of its own, then the fact that the bodies of the damned will suffer pain does not entail that they will be able to die. In short, if the body causes the soul to suffer, why can the body not cause the soul to die as well as to suffer, unless because it does not follow that what causes suffering causes death also? Why, then, is it incredible that these fires can cause pain to the bodies of the damned, in the same way as the bodies themselves cause pain to the souls, but do not thereby compel them to die? The existence of pain, therefore, does not entail future death.

4 Examples from nature which show that bodies can remain unconsumed and alive in fire

Those who have carefully studied the natural history of animals have recorded that the salamander lives in fire.¹⁰ Also, there are certain very well known mountains in Sicily which have been fiercely ablaze from time immemorial down to the present day, yet still remain whole.¹¹ These things, then, give sufficient testimony of the fact that not everything which burns is consumed. The soul also is a proof that not everything which can suffer pain can also die. Why, then, do our adversaries require us to produce examples to prove that what we teach is not incredible: that the bodies of men condemned to everlasting punishment do not lose their souls in the fire, but may burn without being consumed, and may suffer without perishing? For suitable properties will then be bestowed upon the substance of the flesh by Him Who has endowed the things which we now see with such marvellous and various properties that their very multitude has made us cease to wonder at them.

For who but the Creator of all things has given to the flesh of the peacock the property of not rotting after death? This property seemed to me incredible when first I heard of it. But then it so happened that a bird of this kind was cooked and served up to us at Carthage. I took what seemed to me to be a suitable slice from its breast, and gave instructions that it was to be kept. Then, after some days, by which time any other kind of cooked meat would have gone rotten, it was brought out and set before me, and gave

¹⁰ Cf. Pliny, 10,67; Aristotle, *Hist. animal.*, 5,19.

¹¹ Cf. Pliny, 2,106ff.

off no offensive smell. It was found to be still in the same state after it had been kept for upwards of thirty days. And it was still the same a year later, except that it was now a little more shrivelled, and drier.

Who gave to chaff such power to freeze that it preserves snow buried under it, and such power to warm that it ripens green apples?¹² Again, who can explain the wondrous properties of fire itself? In itself, it is bright, yet it blackens whatever it burns. Its colours are very beautiful, yet it discolours almost everything it touches and feeds upon, and turns blazing fuel into grimy ash. This transformation does not, however, come about by any hard and fast rule. On the contrary, when stones are baked in a glowing fire, they themselves are made shining white; and though the fire is red in colour, and the stones white, whiteness nonetheless has the same affinity with light as blackness does with darkness. Thus, though the fire burns the wood in baking the stones, these contrary effects do not come about because of the contrary properties of the materials. For though wood and stones differ, they are not contraries, like black and white. Yet one of these colours is produced in the stones while the other is produced in the wood by the same action of fire. The fire imparts its own brightness to the stones and makes the wood black; yet it could have no effect on the former if it were not fed by the latter.¹³

Again, is it not marvellous that charcoal is so brittle that it can be broken by the slightest impact, and can be so very easily ground to powder, and yet is so strong that it cannot be corrupted by moisture or overcome by age? So durable is it that it is customary, when setting up boundary stones, to put charcoal beneath them, so that if, after no matter how long a time, someone should bring an action and say that this is not a proper boundary stone, he may be proved wrong by the charcoal below.¹⁴ And what has enabled it to last so long without rotting, even though buried in the damp earth where wood rots, except this same fire, which consumes all things?

Let us also consider the wonderful properties of lime.¹⁵ For besides becoming white in fire, which renders other things black,

¹² Cf. Plutarch, *Symp.*, 6,6.

¹³ Cf. Pliny, 36,26; 27,200ff; 2,106; 107,236ff.

¹⁴ Cf. Diogenes Laertius, 2,103; Pliny, 36,14.

¹⁵ Cf. Pliny, 33,5,94.

and of which I have said enough already, it also has the very curious property of engendering fire within itself. In itself, it is cold to the touch; yet it has a latent store of fire, which is not immediately apparent to our senses, but which, as we know from experience, lies as it were slumbering within it even while unseen. This is why we call it 'quicklime', as if the hidden fire were an invisible soul quickening a visible body. But even more wondrous is the fact that this fire is kindled precisely when it is quenched. For to release the hidden fire the lime is moistened or soaked with water. Then, though it was cold before, it becomes hot; and it becomes so by contact with that which makes all other things cool! As if the fire were departing from the lime and breathing its last, it no longer lies hidden, but appears. Then, the lime, as if lying in the coldness of death, cannot be quickened again: if water is applied to it, it will not rekindle. And so what we before called 'quick' we now call called 'slaked'. What could be added that might make this wonder seem even more wonderful? Something more can indeed be added. If you use oil rather than water, the lime does not become hot whether the oil is poured over the lime or the lime is immersed in it. Now if we were to read or hear such a miraculous thing of some Indian mineral which we had no opportunity of experimenting with, we should have immediately supposed it to be a falsehood; or, at any rate, we should have greatly wondered at it. But we take no account of things which daily come before our eyes, not because they are really less wondrous, but because they are common. Indeed, we have ceased to wonder at many of the things which come from India itself, as soon as it has proved possible to bring such wondrous things from a part of the world which is so very remote from us.

There are many among us who have diamonds, especially the goldsmiths and jewellers; and the diamond is a stone which neither iron nor fire nor any other force whatsoever can overcome, except the blood of a goat.¹⁶ But are those who have diamonds now and know their properties as astonished by them as those persons were to whom those properties were first shown? Persons to whom these properties have not been shown perhaps do not believe in them; or, if they do believe, they marvel at them as at a thing beyond their

¹⁶ Cf. Pliny, 20,1; 28,9.

experience. Then again, if they happen to experience them, still they marvel at something which is unfamiliar to them; but increasing experience gradually diminishes the force of their wonder.

We know that the lodestone has the marvellous power of attracting iron.¹⁷ When first I saw it done, I was absolutely amazed. I saw an iron ring attracted and suspended by a stone! Then, as if the stone had bestowed its power upon the iron which it had attracted, and shared that power with it, the ring was placed near another, and lifted it up; and as the first ring stuck to the magnet, so the second ring stuck to the first. In the same way, a third ring was added, and then a fourth, so that there hung from the stone a kind of chain of rings, but with their hoops not connected by interlinking, but attached together by their outer surface. Who would not be astounded at this power of the stone, dwelling not only in the stone itself, but transmitted through so many suspended rings and joining them together by invisible bonds?

More astonishing still is what I heard of this stone from my brother and fellow bishop Severus of Milevis. He himself told me that he had seen Bathanarius, sometime count of Africa, when the bishop was a dinner-guest at his house, produce a lodestone and hold it beneath a silver dish upon which he placed a piece of iron. He then moved his hand under it, holding the lodestone, and the iron made corresponding movements on the dish above. There was no effect on the silver in between, while the stone was being moved very rapidly backwards and forwards underneath the dish by the man, and the iron was being pulled to and fro on the surface of the dish by the stone. I have related what I have seen for myself, and I have related what I have heard from someone whom I believe as much as I believe my own eyes. Let me now say what else I have read of this magnetic substance. When a diamond is placed near it, it does not attract iron; or, if it has already attracted it, it drops it as soon as the diamond approaches.¹⁸ These stones are sent from India. But if we cease to wonder at them because they are now familiar to us, how much less must those people wonder at them who procure them very easily and send them to us. Perhaps they think as little of them as we do of lime, which has the marvellous

¹⁷ Cf. Pliny, 20,1.

¹⁸ Cf. Pliny, 28,9.

property of burning when water, which usually quenches fire, is poured on it, and of remaining cold when mixed with oil, which usually feeds fire. For we do not wonder at lime, simply because it is common.

5 That there are many things which reason cannot explain, but which are nonetheless true

Despite all this, when we proclaim the miracles which the divine power has performed in the past and will perform in the future, but which we cannot make available to the experience of men who lack faith, they demand that we give a rational explanation of these things. And when we cannot do so, precisely because such things surpass the powers of the human mind, they conclude that what we say is false. Let them, then, give a rational account of all those wondrous things which we can or do see. And if they see that this is beyond what a man can do, let them admit that the fact that a rational explanation cannot be given for something does not entail that it could not have happened in the past or that it cannot happen in the future, seeing that there are these things in the present which are similarly inexplicable.

Again, many wonderful things are related in books; and these accounts refer not to events which merely happened and were then finished, but to things which are permanent features of certain places, to which, if anyone wishes and is able to do so, he can go and see whether they are true or not. I shall not go on to speak of these things here; but I will mention a few of them.¹⁹

The salt of Agrigentum in Sicily becomes liquid when thrown into fire, as if it were in water; but, when thrown into water, it crackles as if it were in fire. The Garamantes have a certain fountain which, during the day, is so cold that no one can drink from it, but which, at night, is so hot that no one can touch it. In Epirus, there is another fountain which, like all others, extinguishes lighted torches but which, unlike all others, kindles extinguished ones. In Arcadia there is a mineral called asbestos, because once lit it cannot be extinguished.²⁰ The wood of a certain Egyptian fig tree does not

¹⁹ Augustine's chief authority is Pliny, 31,7; 5,5; 2,103, 37,10; 13,7; 37,11; 8,42.

²⁰ The Greek word *asbestos* = 'unquenchable'; cf. Solinus, *Polyhist.*, 13; Isidore, *Etym.*, 16,4,4.

float on water, as other wood does, but sinks. What is stranger still, when it has been in water for some time, it floats to the surface again, even though, when it has been soaked in water, it ought to be heavier than ever. Then there are the apples of the land of Sodom, which grow indeed until they come to seem ripe, but, when you press them or bite into them they burst open and crumble away into dust and ashes.²¹ The Persian stone pyrites burns the hand when it is held tightly in it, and for this reason receives its name from fire.²² In Persia too there occurs another stone called selenite, so called because it has an inner fire which waxes and wanes with the moon.²³ Then in Cappadocia the mares are impregnated by the wind, and their offspring live for no more than three years. Tilon, an Indian island, has this advantage over all other lands, that no tree which grows in it ever loses its covering of leaves.

These and innumerable other wonders are to be found not in the histories of things over and done with, but as permanent features of places which now exist. It would take too long to pursue them all, and I have other business to deal with. But let the unbelievers give a rational account of these things if they can, since they refuse to believe the Divine Scriptures. They suppose that the Scriptures are not divinely inspired because of the incredible things contained in them, such as the matter which we are here discussing. For, they say, reason will not admit the possibility that flesh can burn and not be consumed, and can suffer without dying. What great reasoners these people are, able to give a rational account of all the wonderful things that exist! Let them give such an account, therefore, of the few things that we have mentioned: things which, if they did not already know that they existed, they would believe in still less than they do in that for which they now refuse to take our word. For which of them would believe us if, instead of saying that the living bodies of men in time to come will be able to burn and suffer eternally without ever dying, we were to say that in the world to come there will be salt which becomes liquid in fire as if it were in water, and which crackles in water as if it were in fire? Or if we were to say that there will be a fountain whose water in the cold of

²¹ Cf. Tacitus, *Hist.*, 5,7; Josephus, *Ant. Jud.*, 4,8,4.

²² I.e., from the Greek word for fire, *pyr*; cf. Solinus, *Polyhist.*, 40; Dioscorides, *De mat. med.*, 5,142.

²³ The Greek word *selene* = 'moon'; cf. Solinus, *Polyhist.*, 40.

the night is so hot that it cannot be touched, while in the heat of the day it is so cold that it cannot be drunk? Or that there will be a stone which by its own heat burns the hand when it is tightly held; or a mineral which simply cannot be extinguished if any part of it is ignited; or any of the other wonders which I have mentioned, while omitting countless others? If we were to say that these things will exist in the world to come, those who do not believe us would answer, 'If you wish us to believe such things, give us a rational explanation of each of them.' And we should have to admit that we cannot do so, because our weak and mortal powers of reasoning are defeated by these and other such wondrous works of God. But we should say also that our reason is persuaded that the Almighty does nothing without a cause, even though the frail human mind cannot explain what that cause is. We should say that, while we are in many cases uncertain as to what He intends, it is nonetheless quite certain that nothing which He intends is impossible to Him. And we should say that, when He declares His will to us, we believe Him, Whom we cannot believe to be either powerless or untruthful. Moreover, though those who reproach us for our faith demand rational explanations, what reply can they make when faced with those wonders of which the human reason can give no account, but which certainly exist and are seen to be contrary to the rational order of nature? If we said that they were to occur in the future, unbelievers would require a rational explanation of us, just as they require one for those events which we do say will occur in the future. Accordingly, just as these present works of God are not non-existent merely because human reason and speech lacks the power to explain them, so those things of which we are here speaking are not impossible merely because reason can give no account of them to men.

6 That not all wonders are produced by nature; for some are due to human ingenuity, and others are devised by demons

Here, perhaps, our adversaries will reply, 'These things have no existence, and we do not believe in them: what is said of them is false, and what is written of them is false.' And they may go on to add the following argument, saying:

If you believe such things as these, believe also what is recorded in the same books: that there is, or once was, a temple of Venus where a candelabrum placed in the open air holds a lamp which burns so strongly that no storm or rain can put it out, and which is therefore called, like the stone mentioned above, the *lychnos asbestos*, that is, the inextinguishable lamp.²⁴

It is quite possible that they will say this, and that they will do so in order to drive us into a corner. For if we say that this is not to be believed, then we shall weaken the other recorded marvels. If, on the other hand, we concede that it may be believed, then we are strengthening the position of the divine beings worshipped by the pagans. As I have already said in the eighteenth book of this work,²⁵ however, we do not hold it necessary to believe everything that the history of the Gentiles contains. After all, as Varro says, the historians themselves seem to be at such pains to disagree with one another that it is as if they were making a positive point of doing so. But we believe as we choose those things which are not actually at odds with those Scriptures which we are bound to believe in beyond doubt. And as to those wonders by reference to which we wish to persuade the unbeliever of what is to happen in the future: those which we ourselves can observe, or of which it is not difficult to find reliable witnesses, are quite sufficient for our purpose. Moreover, that temple of Venus with its inextinguishable lamp, so far from driving us into a corner, opens up a much wider field of argument to us. For to this inextinguishable lamp we add many other wonders wrought by men, or by magic – that is, by men making use of demonic arts, or by the demons themselves. After all, if we choose to deny such wonders, we shall then ourselves be at odds with the truth of the sacred writings in which we believe. That lamp, therefore, was either made by some mechanical or human means involving an inextinguishable mineral; or it was contrived by magic art so that the men who worshipped in that temple might be astonished; or some demon under the name of Venus presented itself with such might that this prodigy both appeared there and continued in being for so many years. For the demons are enticed to take up their habitations by the action of created beings, created

²⁴ Cf. Pliny, *Hist. nat.*, 2,96,210.

²⁵ Cf. Bk XVIII, 18.

not by them, but by God. These created beings offer to the demons what suits their various tastes. As spirits, they are enticed not by food, as animals are, but by such symbols as are appropriate to them: by stones of various kinds, and by herbs, wood, animals, songs and rites. And that men may provide these enticements, the demons first of all most cunningly seduce them, either by inspiring their hearts with a hidden poison, or by the false appearance of friendship. In this way, they make a few of them their disciples, who then become the teachers of the many. For unless the demons first instructed men, men would not be able to know what each of them desires, what they dislike, or by what name they are to be invoked or compelled. Hence the origin of magic and magicians. But, above all, the demons possess the hearts of mortals, and are especially proud of this possession when they transform themselves into angels of light.²⁶

Many things are done by demons, then; and the more we acknowledge that they are wondrous, the more careful should we be to shun them. Yet these very deeds are of service to the argument which we are here developing. For if unclean demons can do such things, how much mightier are the holy angels? And how much greater than all of them is the power of God, Who has made the angels themselves capable of performing miracles?

Then again, God's creatures can by human art contrive very many marvels of the kind called *méchanêmata* by the Greeks: marvels so surprising that the ignorant suppose them divine. For example, two magnets of a suitable size were arranged in a certain temple, one in the roof and the other in the floor. An iron image was thus suspended in mid-air between the two magnets, so that anyone who did not know of their presence above and below might suppose that it hung there by divine power.²⁷ Again, as we have already said, something of this kind may have been done in the case of the Lamp of Venus by some craftsman using the inextinguishable mineral. Also, the demons can raise the accomplishments of the magicians – our Scriptures call them 'sorcerers' and 'enchanters' – to such a height that the noble poet Virgil considered himself in harmony with the sentiment of mankind when he depicted in the

²⁶ Cf. 2 Cor. 11, 14.

²⁷ Cf. Pliny, 34, 14, 148; Rufinus, *Hist. eccl.*, 2, 3.

following words a woman who was a great adept of such art: 'She promises to soothe the mind with spells or to inflict harsh cares, as she chooses; to stop the flow of rivers; to make the stars run backwards; to call up the spirits of the night. You will see the earthquake beneath your feet and the trees descending from the mountain to the plain.'²⁸ How much more, then, is God able to do such things? To the unbeliever, they are unbelievable; but to His power they are easy, since it is He Himself Who has given their properties to stones and to all other things, and to men the skill by which they put them to marvellous uses. He it is Who has given to the angels a nature more mighty than that of any living thing on earth. He it is Whose power surpasses all marvels, and Whose wisdom in working, commanding and permitting is no less marvellous in its use of all things than in its creation of them.

7 That the ground of belief in miracles is the omnipotence of the Creator

Why, then, can God not bring it about both that the bodies of the dead shall rise, and that the bodies of the damned shall be tormented in everlasting fire? After all, God has made a world full of innumerable miracles, in sky, earth, air and waters, while the earth itself is beyond doubt a miracle greater and more excellent than all the wonders with which it is filled. Those with whom, or against whom, we are arguing believe that there is a God Who made the world, and they also believe that there are gods created by Him who govern the world on His behalf. Thus, either they do not deny, or else they go further and proclaim, that there are powers in the world which bring about miraculous results, either spontaneously, or through the performance of a rite or ceremony of some kind, or by magic. Yet, when we offer an example of some wonderful property exhibited by other substances which are neither rational animals nor spirits endowed with any kind of reason – the kind of thing of which I have now mentioned some few instances – their customary reply is, 'This is their natural property, their nature; these are the powers naturally belonging to them.' Thus, the whole reason why Agrigentine salt liquefies in fire and crackles in water is

²⁸ *Aen.*, 4, 487ff.

that this is its nature. Yet this seems, rather, contrary to nature, which has given not to fire, but to water, the power of liquefying salt, and the power of drying it not to water, but to fire. But, our adversaries say, it is the nature of this particular kind of salt to display these unusual properties. The same argument, therefore, is adduced to explain the Garamantian fountain, where one and the same spring is cold by day and boiling by night, so that in either case it cannot be touched without pain. So too in the case of that other fountain which, though cold to the touch, and though, like other fountains, it extinguishes a lighted torch, yet, unlike others, and in a wondrous manner, kindles an extinguished torch. And so again in the case of the asbestos stone which, though it has no heat of its own, burns so fiercely when it has received fire that it cannot be extinguished. And so also with all the rest, which it would be tedious to go over again. Although they are seen to exhibit an intrinsic property which is peculiar to themselves and contrary to nature, still no other reason is given than that 'this is their nature'.

This is, indeed, a succinct reason and, I confess, a sufficient answer. But since God is the author of all natures, why is it that our adversaries, when they refuse to believe what we affirm because they think it impossible, will not accept from us a stronger reason than their own when we reply that this is the will of Almighty God? For God is certainly called 'Almighty' precisely because He is able to do whatever He wills; and He has been able to create very many things which would be thought plainly impossible if they were not shown to us or confirmed by the testimony of reliable witnesses. And this applies not only to things of which we are completely ignorant, but even to the most familiar instances which I have cited. As for those marvels for which we have no evidence beyond the testimony of the authors in whose books we read of them – authors who, not being instructed by divine inspiration, are perhaps liable to human error – anyone may without blame decline to believe them.

Nor do I myself wish all the marvels which I have here cited to be believed in rashly. Indeed, I do not myself believe in them so fully as to have no doubt at all in my mind, except in the case of those things which I have experienced for myself and which anyone else can easily experience. Examples are the lime which boils in water but is cooled by oil; the magnetic stone which draws iron by

I know not what invisible power of attraction, but which cannot move a straw; the peacock's flesh which is exempt from the corruption to which even Plato was subject; the chaff which is so cooling that it prevents snow from melting, yet so warming that it compels apples to ripen; the glowing fire which, in accordance with its glowing aspect, whitens the stones which it bakes while, contrary to that same glowing aspect, it makes dirty most of the things which it burns. So too, black stains are left even by the purest oil, and, similarly, lines drawn by white silver are black. Then there is the charcoal, which is so completely changed by the action of fire into the opposite of what it was that the most beautiful wood becomes ugly, the hard becomes fragile, and what was subject to decay becomes incorruptible.

Some of these things I know in common with many other people, and some in common with all; and there are many similar things which it would take too long to insert in this book. Of those which I have cited from my reading without having seen them for myself, I have not been able to find reliable witnesses from whom I could ascertain whether these things are true, except in the case of the fountain in which burning torches are extinguished and extinguished torches kindled, and of the apples of Sodom which seem ripe without, but which are full of dust within. Indeed, in the case of that fountain, I have not found any witnesses who say that they have seen such a thing in Epirus, but I have encountered some who know of a similar fountain in Gaul, not far from the city of Grenoble. The apples of Sodom, on the other hand, are attested not only in trustworthy written sources, but also by so many who speak of them from their own experience that I cannot doubt the truth of what they say.

As to the other wonders, I have resolved neither to deny nor affirm them. I have cited them, however, precisely because I have read of them in the works of historians whom our adversaries accept. In this way, I have shown how many great things are recorded in their written authorities which they themselves believe even though no rational account can be given of them. Yet they will not deign to believe us when we say that Almighty God will perform things which transcend their experience and sensation, even though we do give a rational explanation. For what better and more powerful reason could be given for such things than to say that the

Almighty can cause them to occur, and will cause them to occur, having foretold them in those books in which so many other things which have already come to pass were foretold? He will indeed do what is now regarded as impossible, because He has foretold that He will; and what He promises He fulfils, so that the unbelieving nations may come to believe the unbelievable.

8 That it is not contrary to nature that, in an object whose properties are known to us, there should be found an alteration in those properties known to be natural to it

But when we say that human bodies will always burn yet never die, our adversaries will perhaps reply that they do not believe us because the nature of human bodies is known to be quite other than this. Perhaps they will say that we cannot here give the reason that we gave when we were dealing with the wonders of nature – we cannot, that is, say that this is a natural property, the nature of the thing – because we know that this is not the nature of human flesh.

But we have our answer to this in the sacred writings: to wit, that human flesh was indeed constituted in one way before there was sin – that is, was made so that it could not suffer death; and in another way after sin, being then made such as we know it to be in this wretched mortal condition, unable to hold on to enduring life. By the same token, at the resurrection of the dead it will be constituted differently again from its present condition as we know it. But our adversaries do not believe these writings, in which we read of man's condition when he lived in Paradise, and how far he was from the necessity of death. After all, if they did believe them, we should have little trouble in discussing with them the punishment which is to befall the damned. As it is, however, we must produce from the writings of their own most learned authors some evidence to show that it is possible for something to become different from what was formerly known to be the definition of its nature.

We read the following passage in the book of Marcus Varro entitled *De gente populi Romani*. I here cite it in his exact words: 'There occurred a wondrous portent in the heavens', he says.

Castor writes that this great portent arose when the brilliant star Venus, called Vesperugo by Plautus²⁹ and Hesperus by Homer, who calls it 'most beautiful',³⁰ changed its colour, size, shape and course. Such a thing had never occurred before, and has never happened since. The famous mathematicians Adrastus of Cyzicus and Dion of Naples both say that this took place during the reign of King Ogygus.

So acute an author as Varro certainly would not have called this a 'portent' had it not seemed contrary to nature. Indeed, men say that all portents are contrary to nature. They are not so, however; for how is that contrary to nature which happens by the will of God, since the will of so great a Creator is certainly the nature of every created thing? A portent, therefore, is an occurrence contrary not to nature, but to nature as we know it.

Who can number the multitude of portents which are contained in the histories of the nations? For the time being, however, we must confine our attention to the one which is pertinent to what we are discussing. What is there so closely regulated by the Author of the nature of the heavens and the earth as the ordered course of the stars? What is there so securely established by laws so certain and unvarying? And yet, when He so wished – He Who rules what He has made with supreme authority and power – the star famed beyond all others for its magnitude and splendour altered its size and shape and, more wonderful still, the order and law of its course. On that occasion, this portent certainly disturbed those tables of the astrologers, if any of them were then in being, by which they calculate, as if by infallible computation, the past and future movements of the stars. It is by consulting such tables that they venture to assert that what then happened to the morning star had never happened before and has never happened since. But we read in the divine books that even the sun itself stood still when a holy man, Joshua the son of Nun, had asked this as a favour from the Lord God until victory should end the battle which he had begun.³¹ We read also that the sun even went backwards, so that the promise of fifteen years added to the life of King Hezekiah might be sealed by

²⁹ *Amphitrion*, 1,1,119

³⁰ *Od.*, 22,318.

³¹ Cf. Josh. 10,13.

this further prodigy.³² Yet even when our adversaries believe in these miracles which were granted to the merits of the saints, they attribute them to magic arts. Thus Virgil, in the passage which I have quoted above, ascribes to magic the power 'to stop the flow of rivers; to make the stars run backwards'. But we read in our sacred writings that the upper part of a river ceased to flow while its lower part flowed on, so that the people of God, under the leader whom I mentioned above, Joshua the son of Nun, might make their way across.³³ This also happened when the prophet Elijah crossed, and, subsequently, when his disciple Elisha did so.³⁴ And we have just mentioned how, during the reign of Hezekiah, the greatest of the stars ran backwards. But, according to what Varro writes, what happened to the morning star is not said to have occurred in answer to the prayer of anyone.

As far as the knowledge of nature is concerned, therefore, let not unbelievers make things dark for themselves. Let them not think it impossible for something to occur in some object, through the exercise of divine power, which does not lie within their own human experience of that object. Even those things which are known to us most commonly in the natural order are no less wonderful, and would be a source of astonishment to all who consider them, if men were not accustomed to be amazed at nothing except what is rare. For example, who could fail to see, on rational consideration, how marvellous it is that, despite the innumerable multitude of men, and despite the great similarity of their nature, each individual man has his own particular appearance? If it were not for this similarity, man would not be a species distinct from other animals; but, without the differences, it would not be possible to distinguish one man from any others. Therefore we acknowledge that men are alike, and, at the same time, we discover that they are different. But it is a consideration of the differences which ought to make us wonder; for similarity seems to be more consistent with our common nature. Yet because it is precisely when things are rare that they are wonderful to us, we are much more surprised when we find two people so much alike that we always or often make mistakes in trying to tell them apart.

³² Cf. Is. 38,8.

³³ Josh. 3,16.

³⁴ 2 Kings 2,8; 14.

But perhaps our adversaries do not believe the story which I have quoted from the written account of Varro, even though he is one of their most distinguished historians. Or perhaps they are not much impressed by the example because the star did not remain out of its usual course for long, but soon returned to its orbit. Here, then, is another example: one which can be shown to them at the present day. And this, I imagine, will be enough to warn them that, though they have observed and made themselves familiar with the nature of something, they should not conclude from this that God cannot alter it and change it into something far different from what they have known. The land of Sodom was certainly not always as it is now. Once, it presented an appearance like that of other lands, and it flourished with a fruitfulness equally great – if not greater, for in the Divine Scriptures it is compared to the Paradise of God.³⁵ But after it was touched by heaven, it became a place of wondrous, blackened horror. Even the history of our adversaries bears witness to this,³⁶ and it is seen to this day by those who come to that place. Also, its apples, under the false appearance of ripeness, contain ashes within. Behold, then: something which was once of one kind, and is now of another. Behold how its nature was changed by a wondrous transformation wrought by the Creator of all natures into something most vile in its difference: a change which took place after so long a time, and which still continues after so long a time.

Therefore, just as it was not impossible for God to create whatever natures He chose, so it is not impossible for Him to change those natures which He has created in whatever way He chooses. This is why there has sprung up so great a multitude of those marvels which are called ‘monsters’, ‘signs’, ‘portents’ or ‘prodigies’. If I chose to recall and mention them all, would this work ever come to an end? The word ‘monster’, we are told, clearly comes from ‘to demonstrate’ [*monstrare*], because monsters are signs by which something is demonstrated. ‘Sign’ [*ostentum*] comes from ‘to show’ [*ostendere*]; ‘portent’ from ‘to portend’, that is ‘to show in advance’ [*praeostendere*]; and ‘prodigy’ from ‘to speak of what is far away’ [*porro dicere*], that is, to foretell the future. Let those who divine by such means see for themselves how often they draw false

³⁵ Cf. Gen. 13,10.

³⁶ Cf. Tacitus, *Hist.*, 5,7.

conclusions from them. Let them see that even when they foretell truly, they do so under the influence of evil spirits: spirits whose care it is to entangle the minds of men who deserve such punishment in the toils of poisonous curiosity. Let them see that, in the course of their many predictions, they sometimes merely stumble upon something which is true.

Now when these signs occur, it is as if they are contrary to nature; they are, indeed, said to be contrary to nature. (The apostle uses the same human manner of speech when he speaks of the wild olive being grafted into the good olive and partaking of its fatness as being 'contrary to nature'.)¹⁷ For our part, however, these things which are called monsters, signs, portents and prodigies ought to demonstrate to us – to show us, to portend to us, to foretell for us – that God will do with the bodies of the dead what He foretold: that there is no difficulty to impede Him, and no law of nature to forbid Him, from so doing. And how He has foretold this I have, I think, shown clearly enough in the previous book, by extracting from both the Old and New Testaments of Holy Scripture not, indeed, all the passages pertaining to this subject, but as many as I judged to be sufficient for this work.

9 Of hell, and the nature of eternal punishment there

Therefore, what God has said, through His prophet, of the everlasting punishment of the damned will come to pass: it will certainly come to pass that 'their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched'.¹⁸ The Lord Jesus called our attention to this most vividly when He spoke of those members which cause a man to stumble: by which He meant those persons whom a man loves as he loves his own right hand. Teaching us to cut these off, He says: 'It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched.' Similarly of the foot: 'It is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not

¹⁷ Cf. Rom. 11, 24.

¹⁸ Is. 66, 24.

quenched.' And what He says of the eye is no different: 'It is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.'³⁹ He did not hesitate to use the same words three times in the same passage. Who is not terrified by this repetition, and by the threat of such punishment uttered so vehemently by the Divine mouth?

But some wish to say that these words – that is, 'fire' and 'worm' – pertain to the punishment of the soul, not the body. They say that the wicked, who are separated from the kingdom of God, will be seared, as it were, by the pain of a soul whose repentance has come too late and fruitlessly. And they contend that the word 'fire' is therefore not inappropriately used to express this searing pain, as in that utterance of the apostle, 'Who is offended, and I burn not?'⁴⁰ Again, they understand the word 'worm' in the same way. For it is written, they say, 'As the moth consumes the garment, and the worm the wood, so does grief consume the heart of a man.'⁴¹ Others, however, are in no doubt that both body and soul will suffer pain in that future punishment; and these affirm that the body will be burned with fire, while the soul is to be, as it were, gnawed by the worm of anguish. This is a more appropriate suggestion, for it is clearly absurd to suppose that in that state either body or soul will be free from pain. For my own part, however, I find it easier to say that 'fire' and 'worm' both pertain to the body than to suppose that neither does. And I think that Divine Scripture is silent as to the pain which the soul will suffer because, though not said, it is necessarily understood that, in a body thus suffering, the soul will also be tormented by fruitless repentance. For in the Old Testament we read, 'The vengeance of the flesh of the ungodly is fire and worms.'⁴² This could have been more briefly stated as 'The vengeance of the ungodly'. Why, therefore, was it said, 'The vengeance of the flesh of the ungodly', unless because both – that is, fire and worms – are to be the punishments of the flesh? Perhaps, however, when he says, 'The vengeance of the flesh', the author wishes to indicate that this is to be the punishment of those who

³⁹ Mark 9,42ff.

⁴⁰ 2 Cor. 11,29.

⁴¹ Prov. 25,20.

⁴² Eccclus. 7,17.

live according to the flesh; for it is life according to the flesh which leads to the second death, as the apostle shows us when he says, 'For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.'⁴³ Let each one choose as he wishes, then. Let him ascribe the fire to the body and the worm to the soul, the former literally and the latter figuratively; or let him attribute both, literally, to the body. In any case, I have now sufficiently discussed the question of whether it is possible for living creatures to remain alive even in fire. And I have shown that, by a miracle of their most omnipotent Creator, they can burn without being consumed, and suffer without dying. Anyone who denies that this is possible does not understand Who brings about everything in nature that amazes him. For it is God Himself Who has created all the wonders of this world that we have mentioned, both great and small, and all the innumerable others which we have not mentioned; and He it is Who has included them all in that greatest miracle of all, the world itself.

Let each man therefore choose whichever of the two explanations he prefers. He may believe that the worm refers literally to the punishment of the body; or that spiritual things are here represented by corporeal symbols, and that the worm refers to the punishment of the soul. The truth will in any case be very swiftly revealed by the event itself; but the knowledge of the saints will by then be such that they will need no experience to teach them the nature of those pains. Their wisdom will then be full and perfect. For 'now we know in part, until that which is perfect is come'.⁴⁴ By no means, however, are we to believe that those future bodies will be such that they will be able to feel no pain in the fire.

10 Whether the fire of hell, if it is a material fire,
can burn the wicked spirits – that is, the devils –
who are incorporeal

Here arises the question: if the fire is not to be incorporeal, like the pain of the soul, but material, and painful to the touch, so that bodies may be tormented in it, how can evil spirits also be punished in it? For it is indeed clear that men and demons are to be punished

⁴³ Rom. 8,13.

⁴⁴ 1 Cor. 13,9.

in the same fire; for Christ will say: 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.'⁴⁵ It may be, of course, as certain learned persons have supposed, that demons do have a kind of body of their own, composed of that dense and humid air which we feel strike us when the wind blows. If an element of this kind could not be affected by fire it would not warm us when it has been heated in the baths; for it is first warmed in order that it may warm, and it does to us only what has first been done to it. But if anyone asserts that demons have no bodies at all, this is in any case not a question which requires to be investigated with laborious care or contentiously debated. For why should we not say that there is some marvellous way in which even incorporeal spirits may be afflicted by the pain of material fire? After all, the spirits of men are certainly incorporeal; yet they are now enclosed within the material members of the body, and in the world to come they will again be indissolubly joined to their own bodies. Thus, even if the demons have no bodies, the spirits of the demons – or, rather, the spirits who are the demons – will nonetheless be tormented by the touch of material fire even though they are themselves incorporeal. The flames with which they are brought into contact will not themselves be animated by their connection with these spirits and become creatures composed of spirit and body. Rather, as I have said, this connection will be brought about in a wondrous and ineffable way, so that the devils receive pain from the flames, but give no life to them. It is by a different mode of union that bodies and spirits are bound together and become animate creatures: the mode, entirely marvellous and beyond the understanding of man, by which man himself is made.

I would, indeed, have said that these spirits will burn without any body of their own just as the rich man was burning in hell when he said, 'I am tormented in this flame.'⁴⁶ I noticed, however, that there is an apt reply here: namely, that the flame was of the same nature as the eyes which the rich man lifted up and with which he saw Lazarus; or as the tongue upon which he entreated that a little water might be dropped; or as the finger of Lazarus with which he asked that this might be done. All these things

⁴⁵ Matt. 25,41.

⁴⁶ Luke 16,24.

occurred where souls exist without bodies. Thus, the flames in which the rich man burned and the drop of water which he sought were incorporeal: they were like the visions of those who sleep or those in a trance, to whom incorporeal things appear in corporeal form. Even when a man sees himself in that state – in spirit rather than in body – he still sees himself in a form so like his bodily appearance that he cannot perceive any difference at all. But hell, which is also called ‘the lake of fire and brimstone’,⁴⁷ will be a place of material fire, and will torment the bodies of the damned, whether men or demons: the solid bodies of men, and the aerial bodies of the demons. Or, if only men have bodies as well as spirits, the demons, even though they are without bodies, will nonetheless be in contact with the material flames in such a way as to receive pain from them without imparting life to them. There will certainly be one fire for both, as the Truth has said.

11 Whether it is just for the punishment of sin to last longer than the sins themselves did

But some of those against whom we are defending the City of God consider it unjust for anyone to be condemned to eternal punishment for sins which, no matter how great, were still committed within a finite time: as if any law ever stipulated it as just that an offender’s punishment should reflect the duration of his offence! Cicero writes⁴⁸ that there are eight kinds of punishment prescribed by the laws: fines, imprisonment, scourging, reparation, disgrace, exile, death and slavery. But which of these can be compressed into a brief duration corresponding to the speed with which the offence was committed, so that no more time may be spent in its punishment than in its commission? Perhaps reparation is the only case in point; for this requires that the offender should himself undergo what he inflicted. Hence, the Law says, ‘Eye for eye, tooth for tooth’.⁴⁹ For an offender can certainly lose an eye by the severity of retribution in just as short a time as it took him to deprive someone else of an eye by his cruel offence. But if scourging is a reasonable

⁴⁷ Rev. 20,9.

⁴⁸ Not in any work now extant, however. Augustine is presumably referring to a lost passage of Cicero’s *De legibus*.

⁴⁹ Exod. 21,24.

penalty for kissing another man's wife, and a fault committed in a moment of time is therefore punished by a flogging which occasions hours of pain, is there not in this case a disparity between the moment of pleasure and the protracted pain with which it is punished? And what of imprisonment? Must the offender spend only so long in chains as it took him to commit the offence for which he has been bound? On the contrary, is not a penalty of many years in irons most justly imposed upon a slave who has attacked his master with a word, or struck him a blow that is quickly over? And as to fines, disgrace, exile, slavery – penalties which are usually inflicted in a way which admits of no mitigation or pardon: within the confines of this life, do not these resemble eternal punishments? For it is only because the life in which they are suffered is not prolonged into eternity that they themselves cannot be eternal. Yet even the crimes which are punished with the most protracted sufferings are committed in only a very short interval of time. Nor is there anyone who would suppose that the torments of the guilty should be over in as short a time as it took them to commit the offence: that murder, adultery, sacrilege, or any other crime, should be punished not according to the enormity of the injury or wickedness, but according to the length of time spent in committing it. And as to the criminal who suffers death for some great crime: do the laws consider that the punishment consists in the brief moment at which he is put to death, or in the fact that he is removed from the society of the living for ever? And just as the punishment of the first death removes men from this mortal city, so does the punishment of the second death remove men from the immortal city. For as the laws of this mortal city have no power to call back one who has suffered death, so neither is he who is condemned to the second death recalled again to life eternal. But if temporal sin is visited with eternal punishment, how, then, say our adversaries, is that true which your Christ says, that 'With the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again'?⁵⁰ They do not notice, however, that 'the same measure' refers not to an equal duration of time, but to the reciprocation of evil: that is, to the principle that he who has done evil should suffer evil. Besides, these words might properly be taken as referring specifically to that of which the Lord

⁵⁰ Luke 6,38.

was speaking when He uttered them: that is, to judgment and condemnation. Thus, if he who judges and condemns unjustly is in turn justly judged and condemned, he receives 'with the same measure', though not the same thing, as he gave. For he gave judgment, and he receives judgment; the condemnation that he gave was unjust, but the condemnation that he receives is just.

12 Of the magnitude of the first transgression, by reason of which eternal punishment is due to all who are outside the Saviour's grace

But eternal punishment seems harsh and unjust to human senses because, in the infirmity of our dying senses, we lack that highest and purest wisdom by which we might understand how great a crime was committed in that first transgression. The more enjoyment man found in God, the greater was his impiety in forsaking Him; and he who destroyed in himself a good which might have been eternal himself became worthy of an eternal evil. Hence, the whole mass of the human race is condemned. For he who first gave admission to sin has been punished together with all those who were in Him as in a root, so that no one may escape this just and deserved punishment unless redeemed by mercy and undeserved grace. But the human race is disposed in such a way that the power of merciful grace is demonstrated in some and that of just vengeance in others. Both could not have been demonstrated in all; for if all were to remain under the penalty of just damnation, the mercy of redeeming grace would appear in no one. On the other hand, if all were to be brought across from darkness into light, the truth of retribution would have appeared in no one. But many more are left under punishment than are redeemed from it, so that what was due to all may in this way be shown. If punishment had indeed been visited upon all men, no one could justly have complained of the justice of Him who avenges; whereas we have reason to give most heartfelt thanks to our Redeemer for His free gift in delivering so many from it.

13 Against the view of those who believe that the punishment of the wicked after death is purgatorial

The Platonists, indeed, while they wish to say that no sins go unpunished, nonetheless suppose that punishment is applied for remedial purposes.⁵¹ They believe this of punishments inflicted by divine as well as by human laws, whether in this life or after death; for a man may escape punishment in this life, or, if punished, may fail to be corrected by it. Hence that passage in Virgil where he first speaks of our earthly bodies and dying members, and says that from men's souls 'come desire and fear, gladness and sorrow; nor do they look up to heaven, but are confined in dark and sightless cave'. He then says: 'Yet when the light of life finally departs' – that is, when this life leaves them on the last day –

not even then are they released from all evil, nor do the body's afflictions entirely depart. For many evils still grow of necessity, taking shape in wondrous fashion deep within them; and therefore they undergo the punishment of pain for their sins of old. Some are hung up, exposed to the winds' blast; the stain of sin is washed from others in a vast whirlpool; from others again, the contagion is purged away by fire.⁵²

Those who hold this opinion believe that there is no punishment suffered after death which is not purgatorial. They believe that the stain contracted by the contagion of earth may be purged away by expiatory pains inflicted by one or other of the elements superior to earth: air, fire or water. The words 'exposed to the winds' blast' are to be taken as a reference to air; the 'vast whirlpool' is a reference to water; while 'purged away by fire' is a reference to fire under its own name. And we concede that, even in this mortal life, some punishments are indeed purgatorial. They are not so, of course, to those whose lives are made worse rather than better when they are afflicted by them; but they are certainly purgatorial to those who are corrected by their coercive force. All other punishments, however, whether temporal or eternal, inflicted as they are on each man by divine providence, are imposed either because of past sins, or for the sins in which he who is chastised is living now, or to exercise

⁵¹ Cf. e.g. Plotinus, *Enn.*, 3,2,41.

⁵² *Aen.*, 6,733ff.

and reveal a man's virtues; and they may be inflicted through the agency of both men and angels, whether bad or good.

If anyone suffers some injury through the dishonesty or error of another, the man whose ignorance or injustice has done the harm sins indeed; but God, Who by His just though hidden judgment permits the harm to be done, does not sin. As for temporal punishments, some suffer them in this life only, others after death, and others both now and in the world to come; yet all this precedes that most severe and final judgment. However, not all men who endure temporal punishments after death come into those everlasting punishments which are to follow after that judgment. As I have already said, some will receive forgiveness in the world to come for what is not forgiven in this; and these will not suffer the eternal punishment of the world to come.

14 Of the temporal punishments of this life, to which the human condition is subject

Very rarely, we come across those who suffer no punishments in this life, but only after it. I know and have heard that there are some who have reached the decrepitude of old age without suffering even the slightest illness, and whose whole life has been peaceful. However, this mortal life itself is wholly one of punishment, for it is all temptation, as the Scriptures declare, where it is written, 'Is not the life of man upon earth a temptation?'⁵³ Again, folly and ignorance are themselves no small punishments, and we rightly consider that they are to be shunned: so much so that boys are compelled, under pain of severe punishment, to learn trades or letters. Yet the learning to which they are driven by such punishment is itself such a punishment to them, that they not infrequently prefer the pain by which they are compelled to learn to the learning itself. If anyone were offered the choice of suffering death or becoming a child again, who would not recoil from the second alternative and choose to die? Our infancy, indeed, by which we begin this life not with laughter but with tears, seems unknowingly to prophesy the evils upon which we are entering. Zoroaster alone is said to have

⁵³ Job 7,1 (LXX).

laughed when he was born;⁵⁴ and that unnatural laugh portended no good to him. For he is supposed to have been the discoverer of the magic arts;⁵⁵ yet, even in respect of the vain felicity of this life, those arts were not able to protect him from the assaults of his enemies. For, himself king of the Bactrians, he was overcome in war by Ninus, king of the Assyrians.⁵⁶ It is written, 'An heavy yoke is upon the sons of Adam, from the day that they go out of their mother's womb till the day that they return to the mother of all things.'⁵⁷ These words are so inevitably fulfilled that even little ones who by the washing of regeneration have been released from the bond of original sin in which alone they were held are nonetheless subject to many ills, and in not a few cases even suffer the incursions of evil spirits. God forbid, however, that we should think that this suffering can harm them, even if it increases to such an extent as to sever soul from body, and so bring their life to an end at so tender an age.

15 That whatever the grace of God accomplishes in redeeming us from the inveterate evils in which we are sunk, this pertains to the world to come, in which all things are to be made new

Thus, 'An heavy yoke is upon the sons of Adam, from the day that they go out of their mother's womb till the day that they return to the mother of all things.' Yet even this evil is found to be marvellous; for it teaches us to live soberly and to understand that, by reason of that first and most grievous sin which was committed in Paradise, this life has been made penal to us, and that all the promises of the new covenant refer only to our new inheritance in the world to come. For the time being, we receive a pledge of that inheritance, and we shall in time to come enter into the inheritance of which it is a pledge. Now, therefore, let us walk in hope, and progress from day to day as we mortify the deeds of the flesh by the spirit.⁵⁸ For 'the Lord knoweth them that are His',⁵⁹ and 'as

⁵⁴ Cf. Pliny, 7,15.

⁵⁵ Cf. Pliny, 30,2.

⁵⁶ Cf. Eusebius/Jerome, *Chron.*, ed. Helm, 1,20,13.

⁵⁷ Eccles. 40,1.

⁵⁸ Cf. Rom. 8,13.

⁵⁹ 2 Tim. 2,19.

many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God':⁶⁰ not by nature, however, but by grace. For there is only one Son of God by nature, Who in His compassion became the Son of man for our sakes, that we, being by nature sons of men, might become sons of God by grace through Him. For He, abiding unchangeable, took our nature upon Himself so that, through that nature, He might take us to Himself. Even while holding fast to His own divinity, He became a partaker in our infirmity, that we, being changed for the better, might, by participating in His immortality and righteousness, lose our condition of sin and mortality, and preserve whatever good quality He had implanted in our nature, now made perfect by that supreme good which is the goodness of His nature. For just as we have fallen into this condition of great evil through one man who sinned, so through the justification of the one Man Who is also God shall we come to a condition of sublime goodness.⁶¹ But let no one be confident that he has passed over from the one state to the other, until he has come to that place where there will be no more temptation – until he has achieved that peace which he seeks in the many and varied struggles of this warfare in which 'the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh'.⁶²

Such a war would never have begun if human nature had, by its own free will, continued in the righteousness in which it was made. But now, in its own unhappiness, having refused to be happy by remaining at peace with God, it fights against itself. Even this, however, though a miserable condition, is better than our life was before Christ came; for it is certainly better to struggle against vices than to be subdued by them without resistance. It is better, I say, to wage war in the hope of eternal peace than to suffer captivity without any thought of release. We long, indeed, for the end of this war, and, kindled by the fire of divine love, we burn to attain that well-ordered peace in which whatever is base in us is subdued to what is above it. But even if – which God forbid – there were no hope of this great good, we ought nonetheless to prefer to endure the distress of this conflict, rather than permitting our vices to have dominion over us by ceasing to resist them.

⁶⁰ Rom. 8,14.

⁶¹ Cf. Rom. 5,12.

⁶² Gal. 5,17.

16 The laws of grace, which extend to all phases of the life of the reborn

But the mercy of God towards the vessels of mercy whom He has prepared for glory is very great.⁶³ During the first age of man – that is, in his infancy – he succumbs to the promptings of the flesh without any resistance. During the second age, which is called boyhood, he does not yet have reason enough to undertake the struggle against the flesh; and so he falls prey to almost every sinful pleasure. For though this age has the power of speech, and may therefore seem to have passed through infancy, the mind is still too weak to grasp what it is taught. But if the child has received the sacraments of the Mediator, and so has been translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of Christ,⁶⁴ then, even if his life ends at this age, he will not only be exempt from eternal punishment, but will not even suffer purgatorial torments after death. For spiritual regeneration is of itself sufficient to forestall any harm which might arise after death from the contact with death which carnal generation creates. But when a child arrives at an age at which he can now understand what he is taught and so be regarded as subject to the authority of the Law, he must then take up the struggle against his vices, and strive vigorously to avoid being led into sins which will bring him to damnation. And if those vices have not yet grown so strong that they triumph as a matter of course, then they are more easily overcome and subdued. If, however, they have grown accustomed to conquest and rule, it is only with toilsome difficulty that they are overcome. Indeed, this cannot be done sincerely and truly other than by delighting in true righteousness; and it is only faith in Christ which brings this. For if the command of the Law is present but the help of the Spirit absent, then the prohibition only increases the desire to sin and so adds to the guilt of transgression. Sometimes, indeed, very obvious vices are overcome by other hidden vices, which are deemed to be virtues even though those who exhibit them are ruled by pride and lifted up by a kind of ruinous complacency. But vices are to be considered overcome only when they are conquered through the love of God, which is given by none save God Himself, and only through the Mediator

⁶³ Cf. Rom. 9,23.

⁶⁴ Cf. Coloss. 1,13.

between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, Who became a partaker in our mortality that he might make us partakers in His divinity.⁶⁵

But few indeed are they who are fortunate enough to have spent their youth without committing any sins worthy of damnation, either by wicked or vicious conduct or by embracing some error of abominable ungodliness. Very few young persons succeed in subduing by their greatness of spirit whatever in them is under the dominion of carnal pleasure. Very many, however, having been first overcome by the strength of their own vices and so been made transgressors of the Law which they have received, then flee to grace for help, so that they may become victors by bitter penitence and more vehement struggle, having first subdued their mind to God and so set their mind over their flesh.

Anyone, therefore, who desires to escape everlasting punishment requires not only to be baptised but also to be justified in Christ, and so to pass over from the devil to Christ. But he should not suppose that any pains will be purgatorial, except for those which will precede that final and tremendous judgment. However, it is certainly not to be denied that the intensity of the eternal fire itself will differ according to the deserts of the wicked. For some it will be milder, and for others more grievous. Perhaps this will be accomplished by a variation in the heat of the fire itself, in proportion to the punishment of each sinner; or perhaps the heat will remain the same, but all will not feel its torment with equal intensity.

17 Of those who believe that no one will be punished eternally

Certain merciful brethren of ours refuse to believe that any or all of those whom the most just Judge shall pronounce worthy of the punishment of hell will suffer eternally. They suppose that the damned are to be released after a fixed term of punishment, longer or shorter according to the amount of each man's sin. I see that I must now deal with these people and engage in peaceable debate with them.

⁶⁵ Cf. 1 Tim. 2,5.

In this regard, Origen carried mercy to even greater lengths. For he believed that even the devil himself and his angels, after suffering the more grievous and protracted punishments which their sins merit, will be released from their torments and united with the holy angels. But the Church has condemned Origen, and not without reason, because of this and several other errors. In particular, he suggests that there is a ceaseless alternation of blessedness and misery, and that the interminable transitions from the one state to the other occur at fixed ages. At this point, however, he loses even the mercy which he had seemed to display. For he assigns to the saints real miseries for the punishment of their sins, yet only false happiness, in which there is no true and certain joy in the fearless assurance of eternal goods.⁶⁶

Very different, however, is the error of which we are here speaking: the error which arises out of the mercy of those who suppose that the misery of those men condemned in the judgment will be temporary, whereas the felicity of all who are sooner or later set free will be eternal. Now if this opinion is good and true because it is merciful, then it will be the better and truer the more merciful it is. Let the fountain of this mercy be extended and deepened, therefore, and reach out even to the lost angels, and let them also be set free, even if only after who knows how many long ages. Why, after all, does this stream of mercy flow far enough to encompass the whole human race and then dry up as soon as it reaches the angels? Yet those whose belief we are here discussing do not venture to extend their mercy beyond human beings, so as to provide even for the redemption of the devil himself. Of, if anyone does venture to do this, he certainly outdoes his fellows in mercy; but he is himself found to err more radically and in a way which, for all that it seems to surpass all others in its clemency, is nonetheless a distortion of the righteous words of God.

⁶⁶ Origen, *De princ.*, 1,6; 3,6,5; cf. Bk xi,23.

18 Of those who believe that, thanks to the
intercession of the saints, no man is to be damned at
the last judgment

There are even some – and I have had experience of such people through conversation with them – who, though they seem to venerate the Holy Scriptures, are nonetheless persons of deplorable morals. When these people plead their own case, they attribute to God a far greater degree of mercy towards the human race than do those of whom I have just spoken. For they say that what the Divine Word foretells is true: that wicked and unbelieving men are worthy of punishment; but they also say that, when judgment comes, mercy will prevail. For they say that God, in His mercy, will grant them the prayers and intercessions of His saints. For if the saints prayed for them even when they suffered their enmity, how much more readily will they do so when they see them prostrate and humble suppliants! For we cannot, they say, believe that the saints will lose their bowels of compassion⁶⁷ when they have achieved the most full and perfect holiness. We cannot believe that, whereas they prayed for their enemies in the past, when they themselves were not yet without sin, they should not pray for their suppliants now that they no longer have any sin. Or will God not listen to so many of His beloved children, now that they have come to such a condition of holiness that He will find no reason for not answering their prayers?

There is a passage in the psalms which seems to support the view of those who allow unbelieving and ungodly men to be released from all ills, albeit only after a long period of torment. And this passage seems especially to support those of whom we are now speaking. We read: ‘Shall God forget to be gracious? Shall He shut up in His anger His tender mercies?’⁶⁸ The anger of God, they say, would by its judgment condemn to everlasting punishment all who are unworthy of everlasting blessedness. But if God allows a long punishment – or, indeed, any punishment – then, clearly, He will ‘shut up His tender mercies’ so that this may come to pass; and the psalmist says that He will not do this. For he does not say, ‘Shall He

⁶⁷ Cf. Coloss. 3,12; Phil. 2,1.

⁶⁸ Psalm 77,9.

shut up in His anger His tender mercies for a long time?' Rather, he shows us that He will not shut them up at all.

But those who are of this opinion do not wish to say that God's threat of punishment is an empty one, even though He will not, as it happens, damn anyone. For, in the same way, we cannot say that it was an empty threat when God said that He was about to overthrow the city of Nineveh.⁶⁹ For, they say, the destruction of Nineveh did not then come to pass, even though God had foretold it without any condition. For he did not say, 'Nineveh shall be overthrown if they do not repent and correct their lives.' Rather, without any such condition He foretold that the city was to be overthrown. But this threat was a genuine one, they insist, because God foretold the punishment that they truly deserved to suffer, even though He was not actually to inflict it. He spared them because they repented, they say; and He certainly was not ignorant of the fact that they would repent; yet He nonetheless foretold absolutely and definitely that the city would be overthrown. This threat, then, was, they contend, an expression of God's severity, because the Ninevites deserved to suffer. But it was not an expression of His mercy; for He did not persist in His anger, but spared the suppliants from the punishment with which He had threatened the stiff-necked. If, therefore, He spared the Ninevites then, when He was certain to grieve His holy prophet by sparing them, how much more readily will He spare those still more wretched suppliants when all the saints will also be beseeching Him to spare them!

This, then, is the conjecture dear to their hearts. The Divine Scriptures make no mention of it; but they think that this is only to ensure that many should correct their lives for fear of prolonged or eternal punishment, and so that there should therefore be people able to pray for those who have not yet corrected their lives. In any case, they believe that the Divine Scriptures are not entirely silent on the point. For it is written, 'How great is Thy goodness which Thou has hidden from them that fear Thee';⁷⁰ and what is the purpose of this verse, they ask, if not to make us understand that the great and hidden sweetness of God's mercy is concealed so that

⁶⁹ Cf. Jonah 3,4.

⁷⁰ Psalm 31,20.

men may fear Him? They also refer to what the apostle said, 'For God hath concluded all men in unbelief, that He may have mercy upon all';⁷¹ and they say that these words signify that no one is to be damned by God.

Yet even those who hold this view do not extend their opinion to the redemption of the devil and his angels or their exemption from damnation. Their human mercy is moved only towards men, and they plead chiefly their own cause. They hold out a false hope of impunity to their own abandoned morals in the form of what they take to be God's mercy towards the whole race. Thus, they are surpassed in their preaching of God's mercy by those who promise this impunity even to the prince of demons and his satellites.

**19 Of those who promise impunity from all sins
even to heretics, by virtue of their participation in
the body of Christ**

Again, there are others who promise this deliverance from eternal punishment, not, indeed, to all men, but to all who have been washed in the baptism of Christ and who have become partakers of His body, no matter how ill they have lived, or what heresy or impiety they have fallen into. Here, they rely upon what Jesus says: 'This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that if any man eat thereof, he shall not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If a man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.'⁷² Therefore, they say, these persons must necessarily be delivered from eternal death, and be brought eventually to life eternal.

**20 Of those who promise this impunity not to all
men, but only to those who have been baptised as
Catholics, even if they have subsequently fallen into
many crimes and heresies**

Again, there are others who make this promise not even to all who have received the baptism of Christ and the sacrament of His body,

⁷¹ Rom. 11,32.

⁷² John 6,50f.

but only to Catholics, no matter how wicked their lives. For these have eaten the body of Christ not only sacramentally but actually, being incorporated in His body, of which the apostle says: 'We, being many, are one bread, one body.'⁷³ Thus, even if they have subsequently fallen into some heresy, or even into heathen idolatry, yet, simply by virtue of their having received the baptism of Christ and eaten the body of Christ in the body of Christ – that is, in the Catholic Church – they will not die eternally, but will in the end obtain eternal life. On this view, all their ungodliness, no matter how great, will not be enough to make their punishment eternal, but only prolonged and severe.

21 Of those who assert that all Catholics who persevere in the faith will be saved by virtue of the foundation of their faith, even if by the wickedness of their lives they have deserved hell fire

It is written that, 'He that endureth to the end shall be saved';⁷⁴ and there are some who, on the strength of these words, promise salvation even to those who have lived evilly provided only that they have continued in the Catholic Church. They shall be saved 'yet so as by fire', by virtue of that foundation of which the apostle speaks:

For other foundation hath no man laid than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day of the Lord shall declare it, for it shall be revealed by fire; and each man's work shall be proved of what sort it is. If any man's work shall endure which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. But if any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.⁷⁵

Therefore, they say, the Catholic Christian, regardless of the manner of his life, has Christ for his foundation; a foundation which no heresy can have, because cut off from His body. And simply by

⁷³ 1 Cor. 10, 17.

⁷⁴ Matt. 24, 13.

⁷⁵ 1 Cor. 3, 11 ff.

reason of that foundation, the Catholic Christian, even if he lives wickedly, will, they suppose, be saved, just like the builders in wood, hay or stubble. Like them, he will be saved 'yet so as by fire': that is, he will be redeemed after the pains of that fire by which, at the last judgment, the wicked will be punished.

**22 Of those who believe that our sins will not be
condemned at the last judgment if they are mingled
with deeds of mercy**

I have also found certain persons who hold that the only sinners who will burn in an eternity of punishment are those who neglect to make worthy reparation for their sins by deeds of mercy. For, according to the apostle James, 'He shall have judgment without mercy who hath shown no mercy.'⁷⁶ Therefore, they say, anyone who has shown mercy, even though he has not changed his behaviour for the better – even if he has lived wickedly and abominably in the midst of his deeds of mercy – will find mercy at the judgment. Thus, he will either not be condemned to any punishment at all, or he will be released after a time, whether short or long, from the punishment to which he is condemned.

This, they say, is why the Judge of the living and dead chose to make mention of nothing apart from works of mercy done or not done when giving eternal life to those at His right hand, and condemning those at His left hand to eternal punishment.⁷⁷ And it is for the same reason, they say, that we offer this daily petition in the Lord's prayer: 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.' For there is no doubt that one who forgives another who has sinned against him performs a work of mercy in overlooking the sin. And the Lord Himself commends such action to us when He says, 'For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.'⁷⁸ And so it is to works of mercy of this kind that the apostle James refers when he says that those who show no mercy will be judged

⁷⁶ James 2,13.

⁷⁷ Cf. Matt. 25,34ff.

⁷⁸ Matt. 6,14ff.

without mercy. And they say also that our Lord did not speak of great sins or small ones; rather, He said that your Father will forgive your sins if you forgive men theirs. For this reason, then, they suppose that, even if a man has lived an abandoned life up to the last day of it, yet, whatever his sins have been, and however great, they are all forgiven daily by virtue of this daily prayer, provided only that he has been mindful to attend to this one thing: that when those who have injured him by any kind of sin ask pardon, he forgives them from his heart.

When, by the grace of God, I have replied to all these errors, I shall bring this book to a close.

23 Against those who believe that neither the devil nor wicked men are to be punished eternally

First of all, it is proper for us to ask and understand why the Church has not been able to tolerate the arguments of those men who promise cleansing or forgiveness to the devil, even after the greatest and most protracted punishment. It was not that those holy men, so learned in the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments, were reluctant to grant cleansing or blessedness in the kingdom of heaven to angels of whatever kind or in whatever numbers, after punishments of whatever kind and magnitude. But they saw that they could not divest of its meaning, or weaken, that divine sentence which the Lord foretold that He would pronounce at the judgment, saying: 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.'⁷⁹ For this passage indeed shows us that the fire in which the devils and his angels are to burn will be everlasting. Again, it is written in the Book of Revelation that 'The devil their deceiver was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where also are the beast and the false prophet. And they shall be tormented day and night for ever.'⁸⁰ In the first of these two passages, 'everlasting' is used, and, in the second, 'for ever'; and these words are customarily employed in Scripture simply to denote a time which has no end. No other more just or manifest reason can be found, therefore, for the fixed and immovable

⁷⁹ Matt. 25, 41.

⁸⁰ Rev. 20, 10f.

conviction of true godliness that the devil and his angels will never attain to the righteousness and life of the saints. For Scripture, which deceives no one, says that God spared them not, and that He has already condemned them to chains of darkness in hell, to be reserved unto the judgment of the last day, when the eternal fire shall receive them, in which they are to be tormented for ever and ever.⁸¹

If this is so, then, how can we say that all men, or even any men, are exempted from this eternity of punishment without at once undermining the faith by which we believe that the punishment of the demons is to be everlasting? For Christ said, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels'; and if all, or any, of these 'cursed' will not be in the fire for ever, what reason is there for believing that the devil and his angels will be in that fire for ever? Will the sentence of God pronounced on all the wicked, angels as well as men, be true in the case of angels but false in that of men? If so, then, clearly, the conjectures of men will be worth more than the word of God. But since this cannot be so, those who yearn to be free from eternal punishment should cease to argue against God and begin to obey the divine commandments while there is yet time.

Again, how can we suppose that 'eternal punishment' means 'fire continued for a long time', while believing that 'life eternal' means 'life without end'? After all, on the same occasion, Christ spoke of both in similar terms in one and the same sentence: 'These shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.' If both are 'eternal', then, we must understand both as either 'prolonged but eventually coming to an end', or as 'without end'. For 'eternal punishment' on the one hand and 'eternal life' on the other are parallel in meaning, and it would be most absurd to use them in one and the same sentence to mean, 'Eternal life will be without end, while eternal punishment will have an end.' Thus, because the eternal life of the saints will be without end, there is no doubt that the eternal punishment of those condemned to it will also have no end.

⁸¹ Cf. 2 Pet. 2,4.

24 Against those who suppose that all those accused at the judgment of God will be excused by virtue of the prayers of the saints

Similar remarks apply to those who, seeming to show greater mercy than others, but in fact pleading their own cause, endeavour to oppose the words of God: by asserting, that is, that those words are true, not in the sense that men will actually suffer the things which He says that they are to suffer, but only in the sense that they deserve to suffer them. For God, they say, will grant the prayers of His saints, who then, being all the more holy, will pray for their enemies all the more earnestly, and whose prayers will be all the more efficacious and worthy of God's hearing because they will then have no sin whatsoever. In this case, however, why will the saints, now entirely perfected in holiness, not also use their most pure and merciful prayers on behalf of those angels for whom eternal fire is prepared, so that God may mitigate His sentence and change it for the better, and remove them from that fire? Indeed, will someone now presume to affirm that the holy angels themselves will join with the holy men who have now become the equals of God's angels, and will pray for the damned, both angels and men, so that God's mercy may spare them that punishment which His truth has declared them to deserve? No one of sound faith has ever said this, and no one ever will say it. Otherwise, there is no reason why the Church should not pray even now for the devil and his angels, seeing that God her Master has commanded her to pray for her enemies.

But the Church does not pray for the wicked angels whom she knows to be her enemies; and the reason why she does not do this now is exactly the reason which will prevent her, however perfected in holiness, from praying at the last judgment for those men who are to be tormented in eternal fire. She prays now for her enemies among the human race because they still have time for fruitful repentance. And what does she especially pray for on their behalf if not that, as the apostle says, 'God will grant them repentance, that they may return to soberness out of the snare of the devil, by whom they are held captive according to his will'?⁸² But if the Church knew with certainty who those people are who, though still

⁸² 2 Tim. 2,25f.

abiding in this life, are nonetheless predestined to go with the devil into the eternal fire, she would no more pray for them than she does for him. She does not, however, have this certain knowledge of anyone, and so she prays for all her enemies; or, strictly speaking, for all men who are her enemies, while they remain in this body. But not all her prayers are answered. On the contrary, they are heard only on behalf of those who, even though they oppose the Church now, are nonetheless predestined to become sons of the Church when the Church's prayers for them are heard. But if any retain an impenitent heart even unto death, and so are not transformed from enemies into sons, does the Church still pray for them – that is, for their souls – after they are dead? And why does she not do so, unless because anyone who has not been converted to Christ while he was in the body is now counted as one of the devil's faction?

The reason which prevents the Church, now and in the future, from praying for the wicked angels will therefore also prevent her from praying hereafter for those men who are to be punished in the eternal fire. And this also is the reason why, though she prays for men, she will not, and does not now, pray for the unbelieving and ungodly who are dead. The prayer of the Church, or of certain pious men, is indeed heard on behalf of some of the dead: for those, that is, who, having been reborn in Christ, did not then spend their life in the body so wickedly that they are to be judged unworthy of such mercy, nor so well that they are found not to need such mercy. So too, after the resurrection of the dead there will be no lack of those upon whom mercy will be bestowed after they have suffered the punishment proper to the souls of the dead, and who will therefore not be sent away into the eternal fire. For it could not truly be said of some that 'They shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, neither in that which is to come',⁸³ unless there were some who are forgiven in the world to come even though not in this world. But the Judge of the living and dead has said, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'; and, by contrast, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels.' He also says, 'These shall go away into eternal punishment, but the

⁸³ Matt. 12,32.

righteous into eternal life.' It would, then, be presumptuous beyond measure to say that there will be no eternal punishment for those of whom God has said that they 'shall go away into eternal punishment'; and such presumption would also make us despair of, or at least doubt, eternal life itself.

As to that verse of the psalm, therefore, 'Shall God forget to be gracious? Shall He shut up in His anger His tender mercies?' – let no one understand these words as if they supported the view that the sentence of God is true in relation to good men and false in relation to the wicked, or true in relation to good men and wicked angels, but false in relation to wicked men. For this verse of the psalm refers to the 'vessels of mercy' and the 'sons of the promise', of whom the prophet himself was one.⁸⁴ For when he has said, 'Shall God forget to be gracious? Shall he shut up in His anger His tender mercies?' he immediately adds, 'And I said, Now I begin: this is the change wrought by the right hand of the Most High.'⁸⁵ Here, then, he clearly explains what he meant by the words, 'Shall He shut up in His anger His tender mercies?' For God's anger is indeed this mortal life, in which man is made 'like to vanity, and his days as a shadow that passeth away'.⁸⁶ Yet in this anger God does not forget to be gracious, for 'He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust';⁸⁷ and in this way He does not 'shut up in His anger His tender mercies'. This is especially clearly seen in what the psalmist expresses by saying, 'Now I begin: this change is from the right hand of the Most High'; for God changes for the better the vessels of mercy, even while they are still in this most miserable life, which is God's anger, and even while His anger still remains in the midst of this miserable corruption; for He does not 'shut up in His anger His tender mercies'.

Since, then, the truth of this divine canticle is fully shown in this way, there is no need to understand it as referring to that place where those who do not belong to the City of God will be punished everlastingly. But if anyone is determined to extend this statement to the torments of the ungodly, let him at any rate understand it

⁸⁴ Cf. Rom. 9,23; Gal. 4,28.

⁸⁵ Psalm 77,10 (LXX).

⁸⁶ Psalm 144,4.

⁸⁷ Matt. 5,45.

to mean that the anger of God, in which He has foretold eternal punishment, will continue, but that He will not in His anger shut up His tender mercies, because he will cause sinners to be tormented with a punishment less atrocious than they deserve. On this understanding, the wicked will not escape punishment entirely, and they will not suffer punishment only for a while; but their punishment will be milder and lighter than they deserve to suffer. Thus, the anger of God will continue, yet He will not in this anger shut up His tender mercies. This is a view which I do not oppose; but I do not support it either.

We come next to those who suppose that the following sayings, and others of the same kind, contain empty threats rather than the truth: 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire'; and 'These shall go away into eternal punishment'; and 'They shall be tormented for ever and ever'; and 'Their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched.' These persons are most plainly and fully refuted, not so much by me as by the Divine Scriptures themselves. For the Ninevites showed repentance, and so their repentance was fruitful. They sowed in that field which God meant to be sown in tears, that it might afterwards be reaped in joy.⁸⁸ Yet who will deny that what the Lord foretold was fulfilled in them, save one who has failed to understand that God overthrows not only in anger, but also in mercy? For sinners are overthrown in two ways. Either, like the Sodomites, the men themselves are punished for their sins, or, like the Ninevites, the men's sins are destroyed by repentance. What God foretold, therefore, was fulfilled: the wicked Nineveh was overthrown, and a good Nineveh was built where there was none before. The walls and houses remained standing; but the abandoned morals of the city were overthrown. Thus, though the prophet was grieved because that did not come to pass which he had prophesied and which those men feared, yet that which God's foreknowledge had foretold did come to pass; for He who foretold it knew how it should be fulfilled in a better sense.

But let those who are inappropriately merciful understand the meaning of what is written: 'How great is the abundance of Thy sweetness, Lord, which Thou hast hidden for them that fear Thee.' To this end, let them read what follows: 'And Thou hast perfected

⁸⁸ Psalm 126,5

it for them that hope in Thee.⁸⁹ Now what is meant by 'Thou hast hidden it for them that fear Thee' and 'Thou hast perfected it for them that hope in Thee', if not that God's righteousness is not sweet to those who, because they fear punishment, wish 'to establish their own righteousness' by the Law?⁹⁰ It is not sweet to them because they do not know it: they have not tasted it. For they hope in themselves, not in Him; and therefore the abundance of God's sweetness is hidden from them. They fear God, indeed, but with that servile fear 'which is not in love; for perfect love casteth out fear'.⁹¹ It is, therefore, for those who hope in Him that he makes His sweetness perfect, inspiring them with His own love, so that with a holy fear, which love does not cast out, but which remains for ever and ever, they may, when they glory, glory in the Lord. For the righteousness of God is Christ, 'Who is of God made unto us', as the apostle says, 'wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: as it is written, He that glorieth, let Him glory in the Lord'.⁹² This righteousness of God, which is the gift of grace regardless of merits, is unknown to those who wish to establish a righteousness of their own, and who have therefore not subjected themselves to the righteousness of God, which is Christ. It is in this righteousness that the great abundance of God's sweetness is found; and so it is said in the psalm, 'Taste and see how sweet the Lord is.'⁹³ This sweetness we do indeed taste during our pilgrimage; but we do not have our fill of it. Rather, we 'hunger and thirst'⁹⁴ after it now, so that we may have our fill of it hereafter, when 'we shall see Him as He is'.⁹⁵ Then, what is written will be fulfilled: 'I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear.'⁹⁶ Thus, Christ perfects the great abundance of His sweetness for those who hope in Him. But our adversaries suppose that God conceals His sweetness from those who fear Him so that men, being ignorant of the fact that He will not condemn the ungodly, will live rightly for fear of damnation, and so that there may be those who will pray for

⁸⁹ Psalm 31,19 (LXX).

⁹⁰ Rom. 10,3.

⁹¹ 1 John 4,18.

⁹² 1 Cor 1,30f.

⁹³ Psalm 34,8.

⁹⁴ Matt. 5,6.

⁹⁵ 1 John 3,2.

⁹⁶ Psalm 17,15.

those who do not live rightly. On this view, however, how does God perfect it for those who hope in Him, seeing that, if their dreams are true, it is this very sweetness which will restrain Him from condemning those who do not hope in Him? Let us, therefore, seek that sweetness of His which He perfects for those who hope in Him, not that which He is thought to perfect for those who despise and blaspheme Him. For a man will look in vain, after he has left this body, for that which he has neglected to obtain while in the body.

The apostle also says, 'For God hath concluded all men in unbelief, that He may have mercy upon all.' But this is not to say that He will condemn no one. On the contrary, the meaning of this verse is shown by what comes before it. For the apostle wrote this epistle for Gentiles who were already believers; and when he was speaking to them of the Jews who would come to believe in the future, he says, 'For as ye in times past believed not God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.'⁹⁷ He then adds the words with which, in their error, our adversaries comfort themselves: 'For God hath concluded all men in unbelief, that He may have mercy upon all.' And what does he mean by 'all', if not those of whom he is speaking, as if he had said, 'Both you and them'? God, then, has shut up in unbelief both Gentiles and Jews, those whom He foreknew and predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son,⁹⁸ in order that they might be confounded by the bitterness of unbelief, and might repent and, believing, turn to the sweetness of God's mercy, crying out in the words of the psalm, 'How great is the abundance of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for them that fear Thee, but hast perfected for them that hope', not in themselves, but 'in Thee'. He has mercy, then, upon all the vessels of mercy. What does 'all' mean? All those of the Gentiles and also all those of the Jews Whom He has predestined, called, justified and glorified.⁹⁹ He will not spare all men; but none of these will be condemned by Him.

⁹⁷ Rom. 11,30ff.

⁹⁸ Cf. Rom. 8,29.

⁹⁹ Rom. 8,30.

25 Whether those who have received heretical baptism and afterwards fallen into wickedness of life; or those who have received Catholic baptism, but have then passed over into heresy and schism; or those who have remained in the Catholic Church into which they were baptised, but continue to live wickedly: may hope to obtain remission of eternal punishment through the power of the sacrament

Let us now answer those who promise deliverance from eternal fire, not to the devil and his angels (for those of whom we have already been speaking do not do that), nor even to all men whatsoever, but only to those who have been washed by the baptism of Christ and have become partakers of His body and blood, no matter how they have lived, and no matter what their heresy or impiety. These are contradicted by the apostle, who says, 'Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, heresies, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and the like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, for they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.'¹⁰⁰ This sentence of the apostle is clearly false if such persons are to be released, even after a great length of time, and will then possess the kingdom of God. It is not false, however; and so they certainly will not possess the kingdom of God. And if they will never possess the kingdom of God, they will be bound in eternal punishment. For there is no intermediate place in which anyone who is not established in that kingdom may exist without punishment.

We may fairly ask, then, how we are to understand the Lord Jesus when He says: 'This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.'¹⁰¹ And, indeed, those to whom we are replying now have taken their understanding of these words from those to whom we shall reply shortly: that is, from those who do not promise

¹⁰⁰ Gal. 5, 19ff.

¹⁰¹ John 6, 50ff.

this deliverance to all who have received the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's body, but only to Catholics, no matter how wickedly they may have lived. For Catholics, they say, have eaten the Lord's body not only sacramentally, but actually: because, that is, they are constituted members of His body, of which the apostle says, 'We being many are one bread, one body.' Thus, he who is in the unity of His body – that is, in the fellowship of the Christians, who are the members of Christ, Whose body the faithful customarily take when they communicate at the altar – may truly be said to eat the body of Christ and to drink the blood of Christ. And for this reason heretics and schismatics, being separated from the unity of this body, can receive the same sacrament, but it is of no benefit to them. On the contrary, it is injurious to them; for it will bring them a more grievous punishment rather than deliverance, even after a long time. For they are not in that 'bond of peace'¹⁰² of which that sacrament is a sign.

But again, even those who rightly understand that he who is not of the body of Christ cannot be said to eat the body of Christ are not right when they promise deliverance from the fire of eternal punishment to those who fall away from the unity of that body into heresy or even into pagan superstition. Let them note, first, that it would be intolerable and entirely at odds with wholesome doctrine, if many, and indeed almost all, of those who have left the Catholic Church to found ungodly heresies and have become heresiarchs were to be in better case than those who never became Catholics at all because they had become entangled in the snares of those heresiarchs. This would be the state of things if those heresiarchs are to be delivered from everlasting punishment merely by having been baptised into the Catholic Church and by having at first received the sacrament of the body of Christ in the true body of Christ. But one who deserts the faith, and, having been a deserter, then becomes an attacker of it, is certainly worse than one who has not deserted the faith he never held. And, second, let them note the words of the apostle which come after those which we have already quoted; for, after enumerating the works of the flesh, he says, with reference to heresies, 'They who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.'¹⁰³

¹⁰² Eph. 4,3.

¹⁰³ Gal. 5,21.

Hence, those persons whose abandoned morals are worthy of condemnation ought not to feel secure merely because they persevere to the end in the communion of the Catholic Church. They should not rely on the words, 'He that endureth to the end shall be saved.'¹⁰⁴ By the iniquity of their lives they forsake that very righteousness of life which Christ is to them, whether by fornication, or by committing in their body other acts of uncleanness which the apostle did not choose to mention, or by giving themselves up to the wickedness of luxury, or by doing any of those things of which he says, 'They who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.' Thus, those who do such things will not exist anywhere save in everlasting punishment, since they cannot be in the kingdom of God. For if they persevere in such things to the end of this life, they are certainly not said to have persevered in Christ to the end, because to persevere in Christ is to persevere in faith in Him; and this faith, as the apostle defines it, 'worketh by love',¹⁰⁵ and love, as he says elsewhere, 'worketh no evil'.¹⁰⁶ Neither, therefore, can these persons be said to eat of the body of Christ; for they cannot be numbered among His members. For, to mention no other consideration, they cannot be at once the members of Christ and the members of a harlot.¹⁰⁷ Again, when He Himself says, 'He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him',¹⁰⁸ He shows us what it is to eat the body and drink the blood of Christ actually rather than sacramentally. It is to dwell in Christ so that Christ dwells in us. Thus, it is as if He said, 'He that dwelleth not in me, and in whom I do not dwell, let him not say or think that he eateth my body or drinketh my blood.' Those who are not Christ's members, then, do not dwell in Him. And those who make themselves members of a harlot are not members of Christ, unless they penitently relinquish that evil condition and return in reconciliation to this good.

¹⁰⁴ Matt. 10,22.

¹⁰⁵ Gal. 5,6.

¹⁰⁶ 1 Cor. 13,4; cf. Rom. 13,10.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. 1 Cor. 6,15.

¹⁰⁸ John 6,56.

26 What it is to have Christ as a foundation; and
who they are to whom salvation is promised 'so as
by fire'

But Catholic Christians have Christ as their foundation, say our adversaries: they have not departed from unity with Him, no matter how bad the life they may have built on this foundation, as of wood, hay or stubble. Accordingly, they say, the right faith by virtue of which Christ is their foundation will save them from the everlasting fire, albeit with some loss, since those things which they have built upon it will be burned. Let the apostle James reply succinctly to them: 'If any man say he has faith, and have not works, can faith save him?'¹⁰⁹ Who is it, then, they ask, of whom the apostle Paul says, 'But he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire'? Let us also, therefore, ask who it is. One thing is very certain: it is not he of whom James speaks; otherwise we should make the statements of the two apostles contradict one another. It would be as if one were saying, 'Though a man's works be evil, his faith will save him as by fire', while the other says, 'If he does not have good works, can faith save him?'

We shall, therefore, understand who can be saved 'so as by fire' if we first understand what it is to have Christ as a foundation. And we may understand this all the more readily if we pay attention to the metaphor itself. In a building, nothing comes before the foundation. Whoever, then, has Christ in his heart, so that no earthly or temporal things – not even those which are lawful and permitted – come before Him, has Christ as his foundation. If he does put such things before Christ, then, even if he seems to have the faith of Christ, Christ is not in him as a foundation, since, for him, other things come before Christ. And if, despising the precepts of salvation, he commits unlawful acts, he is all the more convicted of not putting Christ before other things. For he puts other things before Christ when he neglects what Christ commands or permits: when he disregards what Christ commands or permits in order to gratify his own wicked desires. Thus, if any Christian man loves a harlot, and, cleaving to her, is made one body with her, he does not now have Christ as his foundation.¹¹⁰ But if anyone loves his own

¹⁰⁹ James 2,14.

¹¹⁰ Cf. 1 Cor. 6,16.

wife according to Christ, who can doubt that he has Christ as his foundation?¹¹¹ If he loves her according to this world, carnally, in the sickness of lust, like the nations who know not God,¹¹² this is indeed a fault; but the apostle – or, rather, Christ speaking through the apostle – concedes that it is only a minor one.¹¹³ Therefore, even such a man as this may have Christ as his foundation. For provided that he does not put any such affection and pleasure before Christ, Christ is his foundation, even if he builds on it wood, hay or stubble; and therefore he will be saved ‘so as by fire’. For the fire of tribulation will burn away all such delights and earthly loves, even though, within the union of marriage, they are not deserving of damnation. And to this ‘fire’ pertain bereavement, and all the other calamities by which these pleasures are removed from us. Consequently, the building will bring loss to him who built it, because he will not possess what he has built upon the foundation, and will be tormented by the loss of those things in the enjoyment of which he rejoiced. Yet he will be saved ‘as by fire’ by virtue of that foundation; because, if a persecutor had placed him in the position of having to choose between Christ and these things, he would not have put these things before Christ.

See what the apostle says, speaking of the man who builds gold, silver and precious stones on this foundation. ‘He that is unmarried’, he says ‘careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord’. See how he then speaks of the man who builds wood, hay and stubble: ‘But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.’¹¹⁴ He says: ‘Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day’ – the day of tribulation, certainly – ‘shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire’.¹¹⁵ Here, he calls tribulation ‘fire’, just as we read elsewhere, ‘The furnace proves the vessels of the potter, and the trial of affliction righteous men.’¹¹⁶ And ‘The fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide’ – for when a man is concerned for the things of God, and for how he may

¹¹¹ Cf. Eph. 5,25.

¹¹² Cf. 1 Thess. 4,5.

¹¹³ 1 Cor. 7,5ff.

¹¹⁴ 1 Cor. 7,32ff.

¹¹⁵ 1 Cor. 3,13.

¹¹⁶ Eccius. 27,5.

please God, this abides – ‘which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward’ – that is, from his concern shall come a reward. ‘But if any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss’ – for he will no longer have what he loved – ‘but he himself shall be saved’ – for no tribulation will have dislodged him from that stable foundation – ‘yet so as by fire’; for that which he did not possess without the allurements of love he does not lose without the grief of pain. Behold, then: it seems to me that we have here discovered a fire which destroys neither, but enriches the one, brings loss to the other, and proves both.

But perhaps we may wish to take this fire as being that of which the Lord speaks when He says to those on His left hand, ‘Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.’ On this view, we are to believe that, among the ‘cursed’, there are those who build on their foundation wood, hay and stubble, but that they, by virtue of their good foundation, will in due time be released from the fire that is the reward of their evil deeds. In that case, however, what are we to think of those on His right hand, to whom it will be said, ‘Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you’? Are not these they who have built upon their foundation gold, silver and precious stones? But if the fire of which the Lord speaks is the same as that of which the apostle says, ‘Yet so as by fire’, then both – that is, both those on His right hand and those on His left – are to be cast into it. For that fire is to try both, since it is said, ‘For the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.’ If, therefore, the fire is to try both, so that if any man’s work abide – that is, if what he has built be not consumed by the fire – he may receive a reward, and that if his work is burned he may suffer loss, then clearly that fire is not the eternal fire itself. For only those on His left hand are to be cast into the eternal fire, to final and everlasting damnation; but the other fire proves those who are on His right hand. For some who are thus proved, the result will be that what they are found to have built on Christ, their foundation, will not be burnt and consumed by the fire. For others, it will be otherwise: the fire will burn what they have built, and they will suffer loss. They will still be saved, however, because they have held fast, with a surpassing love, to the Christ Who is established as their sure foundation. And if they are saved, then, clearly, they will stand at

His right hand, and, in company with the others, will hear Him say: 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.' They will not stand at His left hand, where those will stand who are not to be saved, and who will therefore hear Him say, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.' But none of the latter will be saved from that fire; for they will all go away into eternal punishment, where their worm dieth not, nor will that fire be quenched in which they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

But there will be an interval between the death of this present body and the coming of that last day of damnation and reward which is to follow the resurrection of the body. And some say that, during this interval, the spirits of the departed will suffer in fire. This fire, they say, is of a kind which will not be felt by those who have not, by their morals and loves in this life, made buildings of wood, hay and stubble to be consumed. Rather, only those will feel it who have brought with them buildings of this kind. For such buildings, though venial, and not deserving of damnation, are of this world; and they will be burnt up in the fire of transitory tribulation either in the world to come, or both here and in the world to come, or here only, and not in the world to come.

I do not argue with this, for perhaps it is true. It may be that the death of our flesh itself – the death which came into being when the first sin was committed – is part of this tribulation. Also, it may be that, during the interval which follows death, each man undergoes an experience fitted to what he has built. A similar remark applies to the persecutions in which the martyrs were crowned, and in which all the Christian people suffered. Such persecutions try both kinds of building like a fire. Some are consumed, and their builders also, if Christ is not found in them as their foundation. Others are destroyed, but without their builders, if He is found to be their foundation; for, even though they will suffer loss, the builders themselves will be saved. And other buildings again are not consumed, for they are found to be of such a kind that they will endure for ever.

At the end of the world, in the time of Antichrist, there will be tribulation such as has never before been. How many buildings will there be then to be tried by that fire! Some will be of gold, some of hay, but built upon the surest foundation, which is Christ Jesus.

The fire will try buildings of both kinds. It will bring joy to some men and loss to others, but without destroying either, thanks to their sure foundation. But he who prefers, I do not say his wife whom he uses for the sake of carnal pleasure in fleshly intercourse, but any of those members of his family whom he may love apart from delight of this kind: whoever puts these before Christ, and loves them after a human or fleshly fashion, does not have Christ as his foundation. Therefore, he will not be saved by fire. Indeed, he will not be saved at all; for he cannot be with the Saviour, Who has said to us most clearly, concerning this very thing, 'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.'¹¹⁷ By contrast, he who loves the members of his family in a fleshly fashion, but who nonetheless does not put them before Christ, and who, if he were put to the test, would choose Christ before them: such a one will be saved, but 'so as by fire'; for it is necessary that, by losing them, he suffer pain in proportion to his love. But as for one who loves father, mother, sons and daughters according to Christ, so that he counsels them in the obtaining of His kingdom and in cleaving to Him, or loves them because they are members of Christ: God forbid that this love should be consumed as wood, hay or stubble, and not rather be deemed a building of gold, silver and precious stones! For how can a man love those more than Christ, whom he loves only for Christ's sake?

27 Against those who believe that sins which have been accompanied by works of mercy will not harm them

It remains now for us to reply to those who say that only those are to burn in eternal fire who have neglected to perform works of mercy in reparation of their sins. They say this because of what the apostle James says: 'He shall have judgment without mercy that hath shown no mercy.'¹¹⁸ Therefore, they say, he who does show mercy will find mercy at the judgment, even though he has not corrected his abandoned morals, but has lived in wickedness and

¹¹⁷ Matt. 10,37.

¹¹⁸ James 2,13.

iniquity even while performing his works of mercy. Such a one, they say, will either not be damned at all, or will be released after a time from the punishment to which he is condemned at the last judgment. And they believe that this is why Christ will divide those on His right hand from those on His left simply according to their love for or neglect of works of mercy: because, they say, He will admit the former into His kingdom, and send the latter away into eternal punishment. They hold that their daily sins, which they never cease to commit, can be forgiven by virtue of their acts of mercy, no matter what the nature and magnitude of those sins may be. And, as evidence for this belief, they endeavour to make use of that prayer which the Lord Himself taught us.¹¹⁹ For, they say, there is never a day when the Christian does not recite this prayer; and so there is no daily sin, no matter of what kind, which is not forgiven when we say, 'forgive us our trespasses', provided only that we take care to fulfil what follows: 'as we forgive those who trespass against us'. For the Lord, they argue, does not say, 'If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you your little daily offences.' Rather, He says, 'He will forgive you your sins.' Therefore, no matter what the nature or magnitude of those sins, even though they are committed daily, and even though a man does not change his life for the better and forsake them, they can nonetheless be forgiven through the mercy shown in not withholding forgiveness from others.

Those who argue in this way are at any rate right in urging that the performance of works of mercy must be in proportion to our sins. For if they had said that the divine pardon for sins committed daily – even for great sins, sins of any magnitude, and for a life of habitual wickedness – can be obtained simply by performing works of mercy of any kind whatsoever, they would see that it is absurd and ridiculous to say such a thing. For then they would be compelled to admit that a very wealthy man can buy redemption from murders, adulteries, and all kinds of wickedness, by paying over ten little coins each day; and, clearly, it would be completely absurd and insane to say this. What, then, are those suitable acts of mercy of which Christ's forerunner spoke when he said, 'Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance'?¹²⁰ If we ask this question, we shall

¹¹⁹ Matt. 6, 12ff.

¹²⁰ Matt. 3, 8.

find beyond doubt that they are not brought forth by those who defile their lives even unto death by the daily commission of crimes. In the first place, such persons take from the goods of others far more than they give; yet they suppose that, by bestowing a small portion of what they take upon the poor, they are feeding Christ. They believe that they have bought, or are daily buying from Him, a licence to do evil; and so, believing themselves secure, they are all the more ready to commit sins worthy of damnation. Yet even if they had distributed all their goods to Christ's needy members in reparation for one sin only, this would have profited them nothing if they had not abandoned their sins by the love which does no evil.¹²¹ Therefore, anyone who wishes to perform acts of mercy worthy of his sins must first begin with himself. For it is unworthy not to do for oneself what one does for one's neighbour, since we hear God say, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'; and, again, we hear 'Have compassion on thy soul, and please God.'¹²² How, then, can he who does not have compassion on his soul – that is, who does not please God – be said to perform works of mercy worthy of his sins? In the same vein, it is written, 'He that is wicked to himself, to whom will he be good?'¹²³ Works of mercy certainly assist our prayers, and we must take note when we read, 'My son, hast thou sinned? Do so no more, but pray for thy sins past, that they may be forgiven thee.'¹²⁴ We ought, then, to perform works of mercy, so that we may be heard when we pray that our past sins may be forgiven us; but we are not to believe that, while we persist in our sins, we may by works of mercy obtain for ourselves a licence to do evil.

Thus, when the Lord foretold that He will credit those on His right hand with the works of mercy which they have done, and charge those on His left with those which they have not done, He did this in order to show what power such works have, not to give perpetual impunity for sins, but to cancel out those committed in the past. For if men refuse to forsake their habitual wickedness and amend their lives, they cannot be said to perform acts of mercy. Indeed, when Christ says, 'Inasmuch as ye did it

¹²¹ Cf. 1 Cor. 13,3.

¹²² Levit. 19,18; Matt. 22,39; Eccus. 30,24.

¹²³ Eccus. 14,5.

¹²⁴ Eccus. 21,1.

not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me',¹²⁵ He shows us that they do not do it even when they suppose that they are doing it. For if they gave bread to a hungry Christian, as being a Christian, they certainly would not deny themselves the bread of righteousness, which is Christ Himself; for God does not consider to whom the gift is given, but the spirit in which it is given. He, therefore, who loves Christ in the person of a Christian gives alms to that Christian in the spirit of one who draws near to Christ, not in the spirit of one who would forsake Christ if he could do so with impunity. For the more a man loves what Christ deprecates, the more does he forsake Christ. For what does it profit a man that he is baptised, if he is not justified? Christ said, 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of God.'¹²⁶ But did He not also say, 'Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven'?¹²⁷ Many, through fear of the first saying, make haste to be baptised; but why do so few, through fear of the second, make haste to be justified?

Therefore, just as a man does not say 'Thou fool' to his brother, thereby incurring the fire of hell,¹²⁸ when he says it not to his brother, but to his brother's sins, so, on the other hand, he who gives alms to a Christian does not truly give to a Christian if he does not love Christ in him. And he does not love Christ who refuses to be justified in Him. Or, again, if a man has been guilty of saying 'Thou fool' to his brother – that is, of unjustly abusing him without wishing to remove his sin – his works of mercy have scant power to redeem this fault unless he adds to them the remedy of reconciliation enjoined by the words which follow. For it is next said, 'Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.'¹²⁹ For as long as the offender persists in the

¹²⁵ Matt. 25,45.

¹²⁶ John 3,5.

¹²⁷ Matt. 5,20.

¹²⁸ Cf. Matt. 5,22.

¹²⁹ Matt. 5,23f.

habit of wrongdoing, then, works of mercy, of whatever kind, are of little avail as a remedy for such wrongdoing.

The daily prayer which Jesus Himself taught us, and which we therefore call the Lord's Prayer, does indeed cancel out our daily sins when we say each day, 'Forgive us our trespasses', and when we not only say what follows but do it: 'as we forgive those who trespass against us'. But we say this prayer not in order that we may commit sins, but for the sake of those which we have committed already. For by these words of the prayer our Saviour wished to show us that no matter how righteous our life in the darkness and infirmity of this world may be, we are never without sins; that we must pray for their forgiveness; and that, if we are to receive forgiveness ourselves, we must pray for those who sin against us. Thus, when the Lord said, 'If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you', He did not intend us to derive from these words the confidence to commit daily sins, either supposing ourselves exempt from the fear of human laws or cunningly deceiving our fellow men. Rather, He intended us to learn from them that we are not without sins, even though we should be free from crimes. So too, God gave the same admonition to the priests of the old Law, when he commanded them to offer sacrifice for their own sins first, and then for the sins of the people.¹³⁰

But we must attend vigilantly to the actual words of our great Master and Lord. For He does not say, 'If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you your trespasses, no matter of what kind they may be.' Rather, He says simply, 'your trespasses'. Now He was teaching a daily prayer; and, clearly, the disciples to whom He spoke were already justified. What, then, does He mean by 'your trespasses' but 'those sins from which not even those who are justified and sanctified can be free'? Those who seek in this prayer an occasion for committing sins every day assert that, because the Lord did not say 'little trespasses' but 'your trespasses', He therefore meant to include great trespasses also. We, however, here take into consideration the quality of those to whom He spoke; and when we hear the words 'your trespasses', we must take it that He meant

¹³⁰ Levit. 16,6.

only little sins, because men of that kind did not commit great sins.

In any case, those great sins which must be renounced by completely altering one's way of life for the better are certainly not forgiven those who say the Lord's Prayer unless they do what is said in it, and forgive those who trespass against them. For if the smallest sins, which even the lives of the righteous are not without, are not remitted except under this condition, it is all the more certain that those entangled in a multitude of grievous offences can never obtain pardon, even though they have already ceased to commit them, if they inflexibly refuse to pardon others for the sins they have committed against them. For does not the Lord say, 'But if ye forgive men not their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses'? And with the same force the apostle James says that he who shows no mercy will himself be judged without mercy. And we must also call to mind that servant whose debt of ten thousand talents was forgiven by his master, but who was then commanded to pay it because he himself had no pity on a fellow-servant who owed him 100 pence.¹³¹ The following words of the apostle James apply, then, to those who are sons of the promise and vessels of mercy: 'And mercy rejoiceth against judgment.'¹³² For even those righteous men who have lived with such sanctity that they receive into 'everlasting habitations' others also, who have made for themselves 'friends of the mammon of unrighteousness',¹³³ are made such only by the merciful deliverance of Him Who justifies the ungodly, and who reckons their reward according to grace, not according to debt.¹³⁴ Indeed, the apostle himself is among their number; for he says, 'I obtained mercy to be faithful.'¹³⁵

It must be admitted, however, that those who are thus received by those righteous men into everlasting habitations are not endowed with a moral character of their own sufficient to enable them to be redeemed without the intercession of the saints. Thus, it is especially true in their case that 'mercy rejoiceth against

¹³¹ Cf. Matt. 18, 23ff.

¹³² James 2, 13; cf. Gal. 4, 28; Rom. 9, 23.

¹³³ Luke 16, 9.

¹³⁴ Cf. Rom. 4, 4.

¹³⁵ 1 Cor. 7, 25.

judgment'. Yet we are not on this account to suppose that every wicked man who has not changed his life for the good, or even for the better, will be received into everlasting habitations simply because he has assisted the saints with the mammon of unrighteousness: that is, with ill-gotten money or riches. After all, even if such things are come by honestly, they are still not the true riches, but only what iniquity counts as riches. For the unrighteous man does not know the true riches in which those abound who receive others also into everlasting habitations.

There is, then, a certain manner of life which is not so evil that those who live it cannot be helped towards the attainment of the kingdom of heaven by generosity in almsgiving, by which they may relieve the needs of the saints and make friends who can receive them into everlasting habitations; but such a manner of life is not so good that it is of itself sufficient for the achievement of so great a blessedness if those who live it do not obtain mercy through the merits of those whose friendship they have won. (I am often surprised to find in Virgil the same sentiment as that expressed by the Lord when He said, 'Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that they may receive you into everlasting habitations'; and, in a very similar sense, 'He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward'.¹³⁶ For when that poet described the Elysian fields, in which the pagans suppose that the souls of the blessed dwell, he put there not only those who had been able to arrive at that place by their own merits, but he also added 'those whose good deeds have made others mindful of them'.¹³⁷ By this, he meant those who had served others, and had thereby deserved to be remembered by them. It is as if they had used the words so frequently on the lips of the humble Christian when he commends himself to some saint and says, 'Remember me',¹³⁸ and tries to secure such remembrance by deserving it.)

Also, it is very difficult to discover what that manner of life may be; and it would be most perilous to try to define what those sins are which impede us in the attainment of the kingdom of God but

¹³⁶ Matt. 10,41.

¹³⁷ *Aen.*, 6,664.

¹³⁸ Cf. Luke 23,42.

which can nonetheless find pardon through the merits of holy friends. I myself have certainly given much thought to this question without being able to come to any conclusion. And perhaps it is hidden from us, lest we should no longer strive to make progress in the avoidance of all sins. For if we knew what those sins are which, even if they are persisted in and not renounced in favour of a better life, still do not prevent us from seeking and hoping for the intercession of the righteous, human sloth would blithely entangle itself in those sins, and would take no care to disentangle itself from them by any virtuous endeavour. Rather, it would merely desire to be redeemed by the merits of others, whose friendship had been won by the lavish use of the mammon of unrighteousness. But while we remain ignorant of the nature of that iniquity which, even when persisted in, is only venial, we are certainly more vigilant in our prayers and efforts for progress; nor do we cease to strive to make friends for ourselves among the saints by means of the mammon of unrighteousness.

By virtue of the deliverance of which we are here speaking, then, whether effected by one's own prayers or by the intercession of the saints, a man is not cast into the eternal fire; but it is not true that, once cast into it, he will be rescued from it after a certain time. There are some who suppose that what is written of the good ground bringing forth abundant fruit, some thirty, some sixty, some an hundredfold,¹³⁹ is to be understood as meaning that the saints deliver others according to their different merits, so that some deliver thirty, some sixty, and some a hundred; although those who believe this usually suppose that it will happen at the day of judgment, and not after the judgment. As to this opinion, however, someone who saw the great folly with which men promise themselves impunity in the belief that all will be included in this deliverance is said to have made a very telling response. We should, he said, rather strive to lead good lives, so that we may in time to come be found among those who are to intercede for the salvation of others: otherwise, there may be so few of them that they will soon have used up their thirty, or sixty, or a hundred, so that a great many will be left unredeemed, for whom rescue from punishment by the intercession of the saints is no longer possible. Among these,

¹³⁹ Matt. 13,8.

of course, may be found any of those who so rashly and vainly promise themselves the fruit of another's labour.

Let this suffice, then, for my reply to those who possess the Sacred Scriptures in common with us, but who, by a mistaken understanding of what they say, conceive of the future rather as they themselves wish than as the Scriptures teach. Having given this reply, I now, as I promised, bring this book to a close.

Book XXII

I Of the creation of angels and men

As I promised in the last book, this final book of the whole work will contain a discussion of the eternal blessedness of the City of God. This City is called 'eternal' not because its existence is extended through many ages but will nonetheless at some time come to an end, but in the sense intended in the Gospel, where it is written that 'of His kingdom there shall be no end'.¹ Nor will that City be like an evergreen tree, where the same greenness seems to persist because the appearance of dense growth is preserved by the emergence of fresh leaves in the place of those which wither and fall: it will not present a mere appearance of perpetuity by new members arising to succeed those who die. Rather, all the citizens of that city will be immortal; for men also will obtain that which the angels have never lost. This will be brought about by God, the most almighty Founder of that City. For He has promised it, and He cannot lie; and He has shown His good faith by doing many things that He has promised, and many, indeed, that He has not promised.

For He it was Who in the beginning made the world and filled it with all good things, both visible and intelligible. Among these things, He created nothing better than those spirits to whom He gave intelligence, making them capable of contemplating and apprehending Him. These He bound together in one fellowship, which we call the Holy and Supernal City, in which God himself is for those spirits the means by which their life and blessedness are sustained: is, as it were, their common life and food. But He bestowed upon those intellectual natures a power of free choice such that they might forsake God if they wished to do so: might, that is, relinquish their blessedness and receive misery as the immediate consequence. And He foreknew that, in their pride, some of the angels would indeed wish to be self-sufficient for their own blessedness, and hence would forsake their true Good. Yet He did not deprive them of the power to do this; for He judged it an act of greater power and goodness to bring good even out of evil than to exclude the

¹ Luke 1,33.

existence of evil. There would not, indeed, have been any evil at all, had not that nature which was mutable (although good and created by the supreme God Who is also the immutable Good, Who made all things good) produced evil for itself by sinning. This sin is itself the evidence which proves that the nature was created good; for if it had not itself been a great good, albeit not equal to the Creator, then, clearly, its falling away from God as from its light could not have been an evil to it. Blindness is a defect of the eye, but a defect which in itself indicates that the eye was created for seeing light. Thus, even by its own defect the eye is shown to be more excellent than the other parts of the body because capable of perceiving light, since there is no other reason why it would be a defect in the eye to lack light. In the same way, that nature which once enjoyed God proves by its very defect that it was created excellent; for it is now wretched precisely because it does not enjoy God.

But God inflicted upon the fallen angels, for their voluntary fall, the most just punishment of everlasting unhappiness, while to the others, who remained faithful to their highest Good, He gave, as the reward of their fidelity, an assurance that they would remain with Him world without end. And God also made man himself righteous, with the same freedom of will: a creature of earth, indeed, yet worthy of heaven if he clung to his Maker and, similarly, condemned if he forsook God to a misery suited to a nature of his kind. God foreknew that man would sin by forsaking God and transgressing God's Law; yet He did not deprive man of his freedom of will, for He foresaw, at the same time, the good that He would bring forth from man's evil. For out of this mortal progeny, so deservedly and justly condemned, God is by His grace gathering together a people so great that, from it, He will supply and fill up the place left in the beloved Heavenly City by the fallen angels. Thus, that City will not be defrauded of its full complement of citizens; indeed, it may, perhaps, rejoice in a yet more numerous body of such citizens.

2 Of the eternal and immutable will of God

Wicked men do many things which are against God's will. So great is His wisdom, however, and so great His might, that all things which seem to be at odds with His will tend towards those outcomes or ends which He Himself has foreknown as good and just. For this reason, when God is said to change His will – as, for example, when He becomes angry with those towards whom He was formerly gentle – it is the people who change, rather than God. They find Him changed, but only in the sense that their experience of Him has changed, just as, to injured eyes, the sun 'changes' and becomes, in a sense, harsh where once it was mild, and hurtful where it was once delightful, even though, in itself, it remains exactly as it was before. By God's 'will' we mean that which God produces in the hearts of those who obey His commandments, of which the apostle says, 'For it is God that worketh in you both to will.'² So too, God's 'righteousness' is not only that whereby God Himself is called righteous, but also that which God produces in the man who is justified by Him. Again, what we call the 'Law of God' is really the Law of man, given by God. For it was assuredly to men that Jesus spoke when He said, 'It is written in your Law';³ and, in another place we read that 'the Law of his God is in his heart'.⁴ Thus, according to this will which God produces in men, He is said to will what He does not actually will in Himself, but causes His people to will; just as He is said to know what He causes the ignorant to know. For when the apostle says, 'But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God',⁵ it would be blasphemous to believe that it was only then that God came to know those who were in fact foreknown to Him before the foundation of the world.⁶ God is said to have 'known' them then only because it was then that He brought it about that He should be known by them. But I recall having discussed these figures of speech in earlier books.⁷ According to this sense of 'God's will', therefore, whereby we say that God 'wills'

² Phil. 2,13.

³ John 8,17.

⁴ Psalm 37,31.

⁵ Gal. 4,9.

⁶ Cf. 1 Pet. 1,20.

⁷ Cf. Bk XI,8; XIV,11; XV,25; XVI,6.

what He causes others to will, to whom the future is not known, God 'wills' many things which He does not actually perform.

His saints, for example, with a holy will inspired by Him, will that many things should come to pass which do not in fact do so: as when they offer pious and holy prayers for others but what they pray for does not happen, even though, by His Holy Spirit, God has produced in them the will to pray. Thus, when, according to God's teaching, the saints will and pray that someone may be saved, we can, in a manner of speaking, say that God wills it but does not perform it. For what we mean when we say this is that God wills something when He causes others to will it. According to His own will, however, which, together with His foreknowledge, is eternal, God has certainly already made all things in heaven and on earth which He has willed: not only things past and present, but also things future. But before that time arrives at which He has willed that something is to come to be which He has foreknown and disposed before all time, we say, 'It will come to pass when God wills it.' This does not mean that God will then have a new will which He did not have before; but that something will then come to pass which has been prepared in His immutable will from all eternity.

3 Of the promise of eternal blessedness for the saints and everlasting punishment for the wicked

To pass over many other things, therefore: just as we now see fulfilled in Christ that which God promised to Abraham, saying, 'In thy seed shall all the nations be blessed',⁸ so also shall that be fulfilled which He promised to that same seed when He said through the prophet, 'They that are in their sepulchres shall rise again';⁹ and also,

There shall be a new heaven and a new earth: and the former shall not be mentioned, nor come into mind; but they shall find joy and rejoicing in it: for I will make Jerusalem a rejoicing, and my people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people, and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her.¹⁰

⁸ Gen. 22,18.

⁹ Is. 26,19.

¹⁰ Is. 65,17ff.

And by another prophet we are told what God foretold to him: 'At that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust' – or, as some translators give it, 'in the mound' – 'of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt'.¹¹ In another place, the same prophet says, 'The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and shall possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.'¹² And, a little later, 'His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.'¹³ There are other passages pertaining to the same subject which I have cited in the twentieth book,¹⁴ and others again which I have not cited but which are nonetheless written in the same Scriptures. All these things will come to pass, just as those things have already come to pass which the unbelievers thought would never come. For it is the same God Who promised both, and Who foretold that both would come to pass: the God before Whom the pagan divinities tremble, as even Porphyry, the most noble of the pagan philosophers, attests.¹⁵

4 Against the wise men of this world, who suppose that the earthly bodies of men cannot be carried over into a heavenly habitation

But there are certain learned and wise men who oppose the might of that great authority which, in fulfilment of what was foretold so long ago, has now converted all the nations of men to believe and hope in its promises. For they seem to themselves to be arguing acutely against the resurrection of the body when they remind us of what Cicero has to say in the third book of his *De republica*. For while asserting that Hercules and Romulus were human beings made into gods, he says, 'Their bodies were not taken up into heaven, for Nature would not suffer that which comes from earth to do anything other than remain on earth.'¹⁶

¹¹ Dan. 12,1f.

¹² Dan. 7,18.

¹³ Dan. 7,27.

¹⁴ Cf. Bk xx,21.

¹⁵ Cf. Bk xix,23.

¹⁶ *De rep.*, 3,28,40.

This, then, is the great reasoning of the wise. But 'The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.'¹⁷ For suppose that we were only souls – that is, spirits without any bodies – dwelling in heaven, where we knew nothing of earthly creatures. Suppose further that we were then told that we were to be joined to earthly bodies by some wondrous bond, to animate them: would we not much more strenuously refuse to believe this, and argue that nature does not permit an incorporeal substance to be bound by a corporeal bond? Yet the world is full of souls animating such earthly members, connected and bound up with them in a wondrous fashion. Why therefore, if it is the will of the same God Who made this creature, can an earthly body not be raised up to a heavenly body, if the soul, which is more exalted than any body, even a heavenly one, can be bound to an earthly body? If so small an earthly particle could hold within itself something better than a heavenly body, so as to receive sensation and life from it, will heaven not deign to receive it when it feels and lives? Or, having received it, will heaven be unable to sustain it even though it derives its sensation and life from something which is better than any heavenly body? If this does not happen now, that is because the time has not yet come when He has willed that it should happen: He Who, in making this world – though it is commonplace to us, because we constantly see it – has already accomplished something far more wondrous than the transformation in which our adversaries refuse to believe. Why, indeed, do we not wonder at it more vehemently that incorporeal souls, which are greater than heavenly bodies, are bound to earthly bodies, than that bodies, though earthly, should be raised up to abodes which, though heavenly, are nonetheless corporeal? The reason, surely, is that we are accustomed to see the former, and are, indeed, ourselves constituted by this bond, whereas we are not as yet in the latter condition, nor have we ever seen it. If we consult sober reason, however, we surely find that the more wondrous of the two divine works is the interweaving, as it were, of corporeal and incorporeal things, rather than the coupling of earthly things with heavenly, which, though different, are nonetheless both corporeal.

¹⁷ Psalm 94,11.

5 Of the resurrection of the flesh, which some still
refuse to accept, even though the whole world now
believes in it

This may once have been incredible; but behold: the whole world now believes that the earthly body of Christ was received up into heaven. Learned and unlearned men alike now believe in the resurrection of His flesh and His ascension into heavenly habitations, and only a very few of the learned and unlearned remain puzzled by it. If what the whole world believes is credible, then, let those who do not believe it see how stupid they are. If, on the other hand, it is incredible, then surely it is even more incredible that so incredible a thing should be believed. Here, then, we have two incredible things: namely, the resurrection of our body to eternity, and the world's belief in so incredible a thing; and both these incredible things were foretold by God Himself before either of them had yet come to pass.¹⁸

We see that one of the two incredible things has already come to pass, for the world has believed what was incredible. Why, then, should we despair of the remaining one? It has come to pass that the world now believes what was once incredible; why should it not similarly come to pass that the world will again believe something which it now thinks incredible? Especially as both those incredible things, one of which we see fulfilled and the other of which we believe in, are foretold in the same Scriptures by which the world has come to believe.

Indeed, we shall find, if we consider it, that the manner in which the world came to believe is itself even more incredible. A few fishermen, uneducated in the liberal arts, completely uninstructed in the doctrines of their opponents, with no knowledge of grammar, not armed with dialectic, not adorned with rhetoric: these were the men whom Christ sent out with the nets of faith into the sea of this world.¹⁹ And in this way He caught all those fish of every kind,²⁰ including – more wonderful still, because more rare – even some of the philosophers themselves. If you please, then – or, rather,

¹⁸ Cf. e.g. Matt. 26,13.

¹⁹ Cf. Mark 1,17.

²⁰ Cf. Matt. 13,47f.

because you ought to be pleased – let us add this third incredible thing to the other two.

Here, then, we have three incredible things; yet they have all come to pass. It is incredible that Christ rose in the flesh and with His flesh ascended into heaven. It is incredible that the world believed so incredible a thing. And it is incredible that a few obscure men, of no standing and no education, should have been able so effectively to persuade the whole world, including the learned. The first of these three incredible things our adversaries refuse to believe when we discuss it with them; the second they are compelled to notice; and unless they believe the third, they can find no way of accounting for the second. The resurrection of Christ, and His ascension into heaven with the flesh in which He rose again, is now certainly proclaimed and believed throughout the whole world. If it is incredible, why is it believed throughout the whole world? If many noble, exalted, learned men had said that they had witnessed this, and had then made it their care to proclaim what they had witnessed, it would have been no wonder if the world believed them; indeed, it would be mere perversity not to believe such witnesses. But if, as is the truth, the whole world has believed a few obscure men of no importance and no learning, who have told us in speech and writing that they have seen it, why do the few who remain unconvinced show such great obstinacy in not believing what the whole of the rest of the world now believes? The world has believed a small number of obscure, insignificant, untutored men precisely because the divine nature of what they proclaim is all the more evident in the testimony of such lowly witnesses. For the eloquence which made what they said persuasive consisted of miraculous works, not words. Those who had not seen Christ's resurrection in the flesh, and His ascension into heaven in that flesh, believed the testimony of those who told what they had seen because they not only spoke of it, but wrought miraculous signs. Thus, men whom they knew to have only one language, or at most two, were suddenly heard miraculously speaking in the tongues of all nations. A man lame from his mother's womb rose up whole after forty years, cured at their word in the name of Christ. Napkins taken from their persons had power to heal the sick; innumerable sufferers from various diseases were laid in a row along the way where the disciples were to pass, so that their shadows might fall on them as

they went by, and they were for the most part restored to health. Many other wondrous things were done by the disciples in Christ's name; finally, indeed, they raised the dead. And all these things were seen by those who had not witnessed Christ's resurrection.²¹

Now if our adversaries concede that these things of which they read did indeed occur, then behold: we now have many more incredible things to add to our first three incredible things. And we bring together the witness of so many incredible things in order to render credible what we are told of one incredible thing: the resurrection and ascension of Christ in the flesh; yet still we cannot bend the astonishing obstinacy of those who will not believe. But if they will not believe that these miracles were wrought by Christ's apostles in order that men might believe their preaching of Christ's resurrection and ascension, then the one great miracle which this implies – that the whole world has come to believe without any miracles at all – is in any case enough for us!

6 That the Romans made Romulus a god because they loved him; whereas the Church loves Christ because she believes that He is God

Let us at this point recall Cicero's amazement at the Romans' belief in the divinity of Romulus. I shall here give his actual words:

The case of Romulus is much more remarkable because all other men who are said to have become gods lived in ages when men were less educated: when there was a great tendency to invent fabulous tales, and the ignorant were easily persuaded to believe them. But we know that Romulus lived less than six hundred years ago, at a time when literature and education had long been in being and all the errors typical of the lives of uncultivated men had been removed.²²

A little later, still speaking of Romulus, he has this to say, to the same effect:

It is clear, then, that Homer lived a great many years before Romulus, so that in the time of Romulus, when there were by

²¹ Cf. Acts 2, *passim*; 3, 1ff; 19, 10; 5, 15.

²² *De rep.*, 2, 10, 18.

now learned men and the age itself was a cultured one, there was hardly any place left for fables. For whereas antiquity accepted fabulous tales, not a few of which were very crude, the age of Romulus, which was already one of culture, was quick to deride and reject stories which could not possibly be true.²³

Marcus Tullius Cicero was one of the most learned and eloquent of all men, and he says that the belief in the divinity of Romulus is remarkable because it arose in an age when learning was already established, and when false fables were not accepted. And yet who ever believed in the divinity of Romulus except Rome, and that when the city was small and at the beginning of her history? Thereafter it was necessary that posterity should preserve the tradition handed down from the ancestors, and the city drank in this superstition with its mother's milk, as it were. Then the city increased and obtained a great empire; and from her position of power, as from a high place, she spread this belief among the other nations over whom she held sway. Those nations then declared Romulus to be a god, without indeed believing it, but in order not to offend the city whose subjects they were by refusing to give her founder the title which, not from a love of error, but from an error of love, the Romans had bestowed on him. By contrast, though Christ is the founder of the heavenly and everlasting City, it is not because He is her founder that that City believes in Him as God; on the contrary, it is the fact of her belief in Christ as God which is her foundation. Rome worshipped her founder in a temple as a god after she had been built and dedicated; but this Jerusalem laid Christ as the foundation of her faith precisely so that she might be built and dedicated. Rome believed Romulus to be a god because she loved him; the Heavenly City loved Christ because she believed Him to be God. Thus Rome already had an object of her love, and she found it easy to believe in that beloved object as a false good. But the Heavenly City already had an object of her belief, so that she might not rashly love a false good but the true Good, in right faith. For apart from the many great miracles which persuaded her that Christ is God, there were also the prophecies which preceded Him, divine and most worthy of our faith. The fulfilment of these proph-

²³ *De rep.*, 2,10,19.

ecies is not now believed in, as it was by our fathers, as being to come; rather, they are shown to have been fulfilled already. But as to the fact that Romulus founded Rome and reigned there: we read and hear of this only as something which happened, not as something prophesied before it happened. And as to his reception among the gods: the written sources only record this as a belief; they do not state it as a fact. For there are no miraculous signs to prove that such a thing really befell him. The she-wolf who nursed him is thought to have been a great portent; but is it a portent of a kind or magnitude sufficient to show that he is a god? Even granted that this she-wolf really was a wild beast, and not a whore,²⁴ she nursed both brothers, yet the other brother is not held to be a god. And is there anyone who has been forbidden to say that Romulus or Hercules or other such men are gods, who has preferred to die rather than not say so? Would any nation worship Romulus among its gods if it were not compelled to do so by fear of the Roman name? On the other hand, who could count the multitudes who have preferred to die the most awful and cruel death rather than deny that Christ is God? Even the fear of some trivial indignation which it was thought might otherwise arise in Roman minds compelled certain of the cities subject to Roman law to worship Romulus as a god. But the fear of great and divers punishments – not the fear of giving offence to Roman minds merely, but even the fear of death itself, the most formidable fear of all – has not restrained a multitude of martyrs throughout the world from not only worshipping Christ as God, but also proclaiming Him. And the City of Christ, even after she had acquired great hosts of citizens on her earthly pilgrimage, never once fought against her ungodly persecutors for her temporal wellbeing. On the contrary, she refrained from fighting, for the sake of her eternal wellbeing. Her citizens were bound, imprisoned, scourged, tortured, burned, torn to pieces, slaughtered – and they multiplied! It was not given to them to fight for their salvation other than by despising earthly safety for their Saviour's sake.

I know that Cicero argues that the best city will not wage war except in defence of its faith or its safety. If I am not mistaken, he says this in the third book of his *De republica*. What he means by

²⁴ Cf. Bk XVIII, 21, where Augustine also avails himself of this double meaning of *lupa*.

safety, and what he wishes us to understand by safety, he demonstrates in another place. He says:

Private citizens frequently evade those punishments which even the most stolid can feel – poverty, exile, imprisonment, scourging – by having recourse to a speedy death. But to cities, death, which seems to furnish individuals with an escape from punishment, is a punishment in itself. For a city must be so constituted that it will endure for ever; and so death is never natural to a commonwealth as it is to a man, for whom death is not only necessary, but often even desirable. When a city is destroyed, obliterated, extinguished, it is as if – to compare great things with small – the whole world had perished and collapsed.²⁵

Cicero spoke in this way because, like the Platonists, he believed that the world would not perish.²⁶ It is clear, therefore, that he wished a city to wage war in defence of that safety which, as he says, ensures that it will continue to exist as a city for all eternity, even though its individual citizens die and are replaced by the newly born, just as the dense growth of the olive, the bay, and other ever-green trees is maintained by the fall and renewal of the leaves. As he says, death often rescues individual men from pain, instead of being a punishment to them; but the death of a whole city is always a punishment. Hence, it may fairly be asked whether the Saguntines acted rightly when they preferred to have their whole city perish rather than break the faith which held them to the Roman commonwealth itself.²⁷ They are praised by all the citizens of the earthly commonwealth for doing this. But I do not see how they could have followed the advice of Cicero, who says that war should never be waged except in defence either of faith or safety. For he does not tell us which of the two is to be preferred if both faith and safety encounter the same peril at the same time, so that it is not possible to hold onto the one without losing the other. For it is plain that if the Saguntines had chosen safety they must have broken faith; whereas by keeping faith they must certainly have relinquished their safety: as, indeed, they did.

The safety of the City of God, however, is of such a kind that it can be possessed, or rather acquired, only with faith and through

²⁵ *De rep.*, 3, 23, 34.

²⁶ Cf. *Bk viii*, 6.

²⁷ Cf. *Bk iii*, 20.

faith; and when faith is lost, no one can attain to that safety. It is the presence of this thought in a most firm and patient heart that has made so many noble martyrs; whereas Romulus did not have, and could not have, even one such martyr when he was believed to be a god.

7 The world's belief in Christ was due to divine power, not to human persuasion

But it is quite ridiculous to make mention of the false divinity of Romulus when we are speaking of Christ. Yet if Romulus lived some six hundred years before Cicero, in an age which, as he says, was so cultivated that it rejected whatever could not possibly be true, how much more in the time of Cicero, six hundred years later, and still more in the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius, which were certainly more enlightened times, would the human mind have been unable to accept Christ's resurrection and ascension into heaven in the flesh! Men would have mocked it and rejected it with their ears and hearts, had not the divinity of the truth itself, or the truth of the Divinity, with accompanying miraculous signs, demonstrated that it could happen and had happened. And so, despite the terror and opposition of so many great persecutions, the Church has believed most faithfully in the resurrection and immortality of the flesh, first in Christ and then in all those who are of the new age; and she has fearlessly proclaimed it, in order to bring forth a more fruitful harvest in all the world from the seed which is the blood of the martyrs.²⁸ For the former pronouncements of the prophets were read, powerful signs confirmed them, and men were persuaded that the truth, though different from their wonted beliefs, is not contrary to reason; so that, at last, the whole world which had so furiously persecuted the faith now followed it.

²⁸ Cf. Tertullian, *Apol.*, 21, 50.

8 Miracles, wrought so that the world might come to
believe, have not ceased now that the world does
believe

Why, our adversaries ask, are there now no miracles of the kind which, as you preach, happened in earlier times? I might reply that they were necessary then, before the world believed, in order that the world might come to believe. Anyone who still seeks wonders, to make him believe, is himself a great wonder, because he will not believe even now that the whole world believes. But our adversaries speak as they do because they wish it to be believed that miracles did not happen in the past either. How is it, then, that Christ is now everywhere celebrated with such great faith as having been taken up into heaven in the flesh? How is it that in enlightened times, when every impossible thing is rejected, the world has believed such miraculously incredible things without the aid of any miracles at all? Or will our adversaries say that these things were credible, and were therefore believed? – in which case, why do they not believe them themselves?

Our argument, then, may be briefly stated as follows. Either incredible things – which, though incredible, occurred and were seen – have induced the world to believe in an incredible thing which was not seen; or else the resurrection itself is so credible as to need no miracles to persuade men to believe in it – in which case our adversaries are shown to be excessively sceptical. I speak as I do in order to refute their most vain arguments. But we cannot, in any case, deny that many miracles were in fact wrought to testify to that one grand and saving miracle of Christ's ascension into heaven in the flesh in which He rose. All those miracles are, indeed, written in books which contain the whole truth, both as to the miracles which were wrought and as to the belief for the sake of which they were wrought. They have become known in order to produce faith; they have become more clearly known through the faith which they have produced. They are read among the peoples, so that the peoples may believe; but they would never have been read among the peoples, had they not been believed. Moreover, miracles are being wrought even now, in Christ's name, either by His sacrament, or by the prayers or relics of His saints; but these are not distinguished by that brilliance which would cause them to be

proclaimed with a glory like that attaching to the miracles of the past. For the canon of Holy Scripture, which it behoved the Church to define, causes the latter to be recited everywhere, and so to dwell in the memory of all peoples. More recent miracles, however, wherever they occur, are scarcely known to all the people of the city, or even to the whole district, in which they are performed. For the most part, they are known only to a very few persons, and all the rest are ignorant of them, especially when the city in which they are wrought is a large one. And when the story is told in other places and to other people, it is not borne out by an authority sufficient to ensure that, even though told by faithful Christians to other believers, it will be accepted without difficulty or doubt.

A miracle which took place at Milan while I was there, when a blind man was restored to sight, was able to become known to many because Milan is a great city, and because the emperor was there at the time. Also, an immense crowd had gathered to see the bodies of the martyrs Protasius and Gervasius – bodies which had been lost, and of which nothing was known until their whereabouts was revealed to Bishop Ambrose in a dream – and the miracle was witnessed by all those people.²⁹ It was there that the darkness in which the blind man had lived so long was dispelled, and he saw the light of day.

By contrast, however, who but a very few people at Carthage know of the healing wrought upon Innocentius, sometime advocate of the vice-prefecture; an event at which I was present and saw with my own eyes? For when I and my brother Alypius, who were not yet priests, though already servants of God, came from across the sea, Innocentius received us and we dwelt with him, for he and all his household were deeply religious. He was under the care of physicians for fistulae, having a number of them of a complex kind in the rectum and elsewhere in his body. The surgeons had operated on some of these and were now bringing all their skill to bear upon the rest. But the patient had suffered prolonged and dreadful pain during the operation, and there still remained one ulcer which had eluded the surgeons and which required to be opened up with the knife, but which was so well hidden that they could not reach it. All the other ulcers which had been opened up for treatment were

²⁹ Cf. Ambrose, *Epist.* 22; Augustine, *Confess.*, 9,7; *Serm.*, 286; 318.

presently cured; but this last one persisted, and to it they devoted their labour in vain. The patient, having been made anxious by the delay, grew very apprehensive at the prospect of another operation, which another physician, a member of his own household, had predicted. This physician had not been allowed to witness the first operation, and so had not seen what was done; and Innocentius angrily dismissed him from the house, and could hardly be persuaded to allow him back. But now Innocentius erupted with the question, 'Are you going to cut me again? Are we, after all, to listen to him whom you would not allow to be present?' They mocked the other physician as having no skill, and soothed the man's fears with fair words and promises. After several days, all that they did was of no avail; but still the physicians insisted on promising to close the ulcer by medical means, and without recourse to the knife. Then they called in another physician of great distinction in that branch of the art, an old man called Ammonius, who was still alive at that time. Having examined the place, he gave the patient the same assurance as the others and promised that their diligence and skill would have a favourable outcome. Reassured by so great an authority, the patient began to make fun of his domestic physician, who had predicted another operation in the future, as if he were already cured. What happened next? After a number of days had passed to no effect, the physicians, exhausted and confused, confessed that, after all, no cure was possible without the knife. The patient was appalled. He grew pale, distracted with an excess of fear; and when he had collected himself sufficiently to be able to speak, he commanded them to go away and never to come near him again. Then, exhausted with weeping, he could think of no other course, in his present necessity, than to send for a certain Alexandrian who was at that time regarded as a marvellous surgeon, in order that he might do what Innocentius in his anger had forbidden the others to do. But when the surgeon came and with his artist's eye observed in the scars the quality of the work done by the other physicians, he did his duty as a good man: he persuaded the patient that it would be better to let those who, as he saw, with admiration, from his own examination, had laboured so hard on the case bring the cure to its final fruition. He added that a cure truly could not be achieved without another operation, but that it would be greatly abhorrent to his principles to take the credit for that cure by doing

what little remained to be done, and so depriving of their reward men whose supreme skill, care and diligence was so evident in the scars they had left. Accordingly, they were received back into favour, and it was thought well that the Alexandrian should be present while the others used the knife to open up the ulcer, which, by now, all agreed was otherwise incurable. The matter was postponed until the following day. But when the physicians had departed, such lamentation began in the house, in sympathy with the grief of the master, that it resembled the mourning at a funeral, and we were hardly able to subdue it.

Certain holy men visited the sufferer each day: Saturninus of blessed memory, who was at that time bishop of Uzali; the presbyter Gulosus; and the deacons of the church at Carthage. Among these last, and the only one of them still occupied with human affairs, was Aurelius, now a bishop and a man to be spoken of only with proper honour. I have often spoken to him of this event as we recalled the wondrous works of God together; for I found that he remembered very clearly what I am now describing. When those holy men were visiting Innocentius, as was their custom, on the evening of the same day, he besought them, with miserable tears, that they would deign to be present next day at what he assumed would be his funeral rather than his suffering. For the pain which he had already undergone filled him with such dread that he did not doubt that he was about to die at the hands of the physicians. They comforted him, and exhorted him to have faith in God and submit himself to God's will like a man. Then we commenced to pray; but while we were kneeling and bowing ourselves down to the ground in the customary manner, he cast himself down, as if someone had flung him prostrate by force, and began to pray. Who can describe in words the way in which he prayed: the emotion, the agony of spirit, the flood of tears, the moans and sobs which racked his every limb and almost prevented him from speaking! I do not know whether the others, having had their attention distracted in this way, were able to pray; but I certainly could not pray at all. I merely said, briefly, the following words in my heart: 'O Lord, what prayers of Thy people wilt Thou hear, if Thou hearest not these?' For it seemed to me that nothing could be added to this prayer, unless he expired while praying. Having received the benediction of the bishop, we arose and departed, Innocentius imploring his

friends to be with him the following morning, and they exhorting him to be of good cheer. The dreaded day dawned. The servants of God were there, as they had promised to be; the medical men came in; all that the case required was made ready; the frightful instruments are produced; all look on in astonishment and trepidation. While those who have most influence with the patient are comforting his fainting spirit, his limbs are arranged on the table so as to suit the hand of the surgeon. The knots of the bandages are loosed; the place is laid bare. The surgeon examines it and, knife at the ready, carefully looks for the ulcer that is to be laid open. He searches for it with his eyes; he feels for it with his finger; he examines it in every way – and he finds a perfectly firm scar! No words of mine can describe the joy and praise and thanksgiving to the merciful and almighty God which poured forth, with tears of gladness, from the mouths of all those present! Let the scene be rather imagined than described!

In the same city of Carthage, there dwelt, as one of its foremost citizens, a deeply religious woman named Innocentia. She was suffering from cancer of the breast: a condition which, as the physicians say, cannot be healed by medical means. The usual practice, therefore, is to cut out the cancer and remove from the body the part in which it has arisen. Alternatively, the physicians follow the advice of Hippocrates and simply do not treat the condition at all. In this way, the patient's life may be to a certain extent prolonged; but death is the invariable outcome, even though somewhat postponed. Innocentia was told all this by a distinguished physician who was a close friend of the family; and she turned for help to God alone, in prayer. As Easter drew nigh, she was told in a dream to watch for the first person to come out of the women's part of the baptistry after being baptised, and to ask her to make the sign of Christ over the site of her cancer. This was done, and she was straightway healed. The physician who had told her to apply no remedy if she wished to live a little longer subsequently examined her, and found that she whom he knew to have had the disease when he examined her last was now perfectly restored to health. He questioned her with some force as to what remedy she had employed, anxious, as we are given to understand, to discover a medicine which might overturn the opinion of Hippocrates. But when he heard what had happened, he is said to have replied, with

scrupulous politeness, but in a voice of scepticism and with a manner which made her fear that he was about to revile Christ, 'I thought you were going to tell me some great thing!' When he saw that she was shocked at this, he at once added, 'What great thing is it for Christ to heal a cancer, When He raised a man who had been four days dead?'

When I heard what had been wrought in that city upon a person far from obscure, I was extremely angry that so enormous a miracle should have been kept hidden, and I thought it right to admonish her on the subject and rebuke her with some severity. She replied that she had not kept silent on the matter; but when I asked the women who were her closest friends whether they had heard of this before, they answered that they knew nothing of it. 'See', I said, 'what your not remaining silent amounts to, when even those who know you best have heard nothing of what has happened!' But my brief questioning now caused her to describe the manner in which the whole sequence of events had come to pass; and those who heard her listened in great wonder, glorifying God.

In the same city there dwelt a certain physician who suffered from gout. He had entered his name for baptism; but, the day before he was to be baptised, there appeared to him in a dream black woolly-haired boys, whom he understood to be demons, who forbade him to be baptised that year. When he would not heed them they stamped on his feet and caused him the bitterest pain that he had ever experienced; but this only made him more determined to overcome them and not defer being washed in the fount of regeneration. Then, as he was being baptised, he was relieved not only of the pain with which he was being tortured more severely than usual, but also of the gout itself; and, though he lived a long time afterwards, he never again suffered pain in his feet. But who knows of this? We know of it, however, and so do a very few of the brethren to whose notice it has been able to come.

A certain comic actor of Curubis was cured at his baptism not only of paralysis, but also of a serious deformity of the genitals, and, being relieved of both afflictions, came up out of the fount of regeneration as if he had had nothing wrong with his body. Who outside of Curubis, apart from a very few who might have heard it elsewhere, knows of this? But when we learnt of it, we made the man come to Carthage by order of the holy bishop Aurclius, even

though we had already heard the story from those whose good faith we could not doubt.

We have among us a man of tribunician rank named Hesperius: he has an estate called Zubedi in the district of Fussala. Finding that his family, his cattle and his servants were all suffering from the malign influence of evil spirits, he asked our presbyters, during my absence, that one of them might go back with him and drive those spirits away by his prayers. One went, and offered the sacrifice of the body of Christ there, praying to the utmost of his power that the vexation might cease; and cease it did, at once, by the grace of God. Now Hesperius had received from a friend of his some holy earth brought back from Jerusalem, where Christ was buried and rose again the third day. He had hung this earth up in his bed-chamber, that he might suffer no harm. When his house had been purged of its infestation of demons, Hesperius began to wonder what he ought to do with the earth; for his reverence for it made him unwilling to keep it any longer in his bedchamber. It so happened that I and Maximinus, bishop of Sinita, who was at that time my colleague, were in the vicinity. Hesperius asked us to call on him, and we went. When he had told us all that had happened, he begged that the earth might be buried in some spot which might then become a place of prayer where Christians could foregather to celebrate the worship of God. We did not object, and this was done. But there was in that neighbourhood a young countryman who was paralysed. When he heard of this, he besought his parents to take him to that holy place without delay. Having been brought there, he prayed, and immediately went away healed, on his own two feet.

There is a villa called Victoriana, less than thirty miles from Hippo Regius, where there is a shrine dedicated to the Milanese martyrs Protasius and Gervasius. A certain young man had become possessed by a demon while watering his horse in a riverside pool at noon one summer's day; and he was carried to that shrine. As he lay there, either close to death or resembling one dead, the lady of the house came to the place with her maidservants and certain other conscientious worshippers for their usual evening hymns and prayers. They began to sing hymns. At this sound, the young man leaped up as if struck, and with terrible shrieks seized the altar and clung to it as if not daring or not able to let go, and as if bound or fixed to it. Then, with loud wails, begging to be spared, the demon

confessed where and when and how he had entered the young man. Eventually, he announced that he would now go out of him; but he threatened to damage certain parts of his body, which he named one by one, as he went. With these words, he departed from the man; but one of the young man's eyes fell out and hung down to his jaw, suspended from within by a slender vein like a root; and the whole of the pupil, which had been black, now became white. When this was seen by those present (others had by now arrived, summoned by his cries, and all were prostrating themselves in prayer for him), though they rejoiced that he was now restored to his right mind, they were much concerned for the eye, and said that he should seek medical advice. But his sister's husband, who had brought him thither, said, 'God, Who has put the demon to flight, can also restore his eye at the prayers of His saints.' Then, as well as he could, he put back the eye which had fallen out and was dangling there, and bound it in place with a napkin, and counselled him not to untie the napkin for seven days. When he did this, the eye was found to be completely healed. Others also were cured at that place; but it would take too long to mention them all.

I know a certain young woman at Hippo who was quickly cured of a demon when she anointed herself with an oil in which were mixed the tears shed by a presbyter while praying for her. I know also of a bishop who on one occasion prayed for a young man whom he had never seen, and that young man was straightway delivered of a demon.

There was an old man in our city of Hippo called Florentius, a devout and poor man who supported himself by the tailor's art. He lost his cloak, and could not afford to buy another one; so he went to the shrine of the Twenty Martyrs, which is held in the greatest honour among us, and there prayed in a loud voice that he might be clothed. Certain young men who happened to be present heard him and laughed at him; and when he went out they followed him with mockery, as if he had asked the martyrs for fifty pence to buy a cloak. As he walked on in silence, he saw a large fish cast up on the shore, twitching. With the encouragement and help of the young men he took hold of it and sold it for curing to a certain cook called Catosus, a good Christian, telling him what had happened. He sold it for 300 pence, which he spent on wool, so that his wife might do what she could to make a cloak for him. On

cutting the fish open, however, the cook found a gold ring in its belly. Moved by compassion and struck by religious awe, he at once gave it to the man, saying, 'See how the Twenty Martyrs have clothed you!'

When the bishop Praejectus was bringing the relics of the most glorious martyr Stephen to the waters of Tibilis, a great multitude came to the shrine to meet him. There, a blind woman begged that she might be led up to the bishop who was carrying them. He gave her the flowers he was carrying. She took them, held them to her eyes – and at once saw. Those present were astounded, and she went ahead of them rejoicing, finding her way without any longer needing to be led. The relics of this martyr were placed in the castle of Sinita, which is near the colonial town of Hippo. They were borne there by the bishop Lucullus, with the people going on before and following along behind. Lucullus had long laboured under the pain of a fistula which his most intimate personal physician was waiting for an opportunity to cut; and this was suddenly healed by the mere act of carrying that sacred burden, so that there was afterwards no trace of it in his body.

Eucharius was a Spanish presbyter who dwelt at Calama, and who had for a long time laboured under the malady called the stone. By the relics of the same martyr, brought to him by the bishop Possidius, he was made whole. Subsequently the same presbyter lay dead, having succumbed to another illness, and already they were binding his thumbs together. But the presbyter's cloak was sent to the shrine of the martyr, brought back, and laid upon his body; whereupon, by the aid of the martyr, he was brought back to life.

There was a man of high distinction in his order called Martialis, now well stricken in years and greatly disliking the Christian religion. But his daughter was a believer, and her husband had been baptised that same year. When Martialis became ill, they besought him with many tears to become a Christian; but he adamantly refused and dismissed them with great indignation. It then seemed good to his son-in-law to go to the Shrine of St Stephen and pray there with all his might for Martialis, that God might give him a good frame of mind, so that he should not put off believing in Christ. This he did, with much sighing and weeping, and with the burning ardour of sincere piety. Then, as he departed, he took up some of the flowers which were lying on the altar, and, as it was

already night, placed them by the head of Martialis as he slept. And behold, just before dawn Martialis shouts for someone to run and fetch the bishop, who happened at that time to be with me at Hippo. When he heard that the bishop was not there, he asked for the presbyters to come instead. They came; and, to the amazement and joy of all, he declared that he believed, and was baptised. Then, for as long as he remained alive, the following words were on his lips: 'Christ, receive my spirit.' He did not know that these were the last words of the most blessed Stephen when he was stoned by the Jews. But they were his last words also; for not long afterwards he himself departed this life.

In the same place, two men – one a citizen and the other a stranger – were cured of gout by the same martyr. But the citizen was entirely cured, while the stranger heard by revelation what he should do when the pain returned; and when he did it, the pain was immediately relieved.

Audurus is the name of an estate where there is a church, and in the church there is a shrine of the martyr Stephen. A certain little boy was playing in the forecourt when the oxen drawing a cart wandered off the path and ran over him with the wheel. He lay quivering, at the point of death; but his mother snatched him up and placed him before the shrine, and not only did he revive, but also appeared entirely uninjured.

A devout woman who lived at Caspalium, a neighbouring estate, was grievously ill. When her life was despaired of, her dress was brought to this shrine, but she died before it could be brought back. Nonetheless, her parents wrapped her corpse in the dress, and, her breath returning, she was made whole.

At Hippo a certain Syrian named Bassus was praying at the shrine of the same martyr for his daughter, who was ill and in peril of her life. He too had brought her dress with him. Then, behold, his servants ran from the house to tell him she was dead. But since he was at prayer his friends intercepted them and forbade them to tell him, lest he should begin to weep in public. And when he had returned to his house, which was already loud with the lamentations of his household, and had spread over his daughter's body the dress he was carrying, she was restored to life.

There, too, the son of one of our tax-gatherers, Irenaeus, fell ill and died. As his body lay lifeless and preparations were being made

for the funeral amidst mourning and lamentation, one of the friends who, among others, were comforting the father suggested that the body might be anointed with the oil of the same martyr. This was done, and he came back to life. Again, a man of tribunician rank among us, Eleusinus, laid his infant son, who had become ill and expired, on the shrine of the martyr which is in the district where he dwelt, and, when he had poured out his prayers there with many tears, he took up his child alive.

What am I to do? I am so much driven by the need to fulfil my promise of completing this work that I cannot record all the miracles of which I have knowledge. No doubt many of our people, when they read these things, will scold me for having omitted so many of which both they and I certainly know. At this point, however, I ask them to forgive me, and to consider what a long and laborious task it would be to mention them all: a task which the purpose this work does not, after all, compel me to undertake. Even if I mentioned no others and chose to write only of the miracles of healing which have been wrought in the district of Calama and in our city of Hippo by means of this martyr – that is, of the most glorious Stephen – they would fill many books. Even then, indeed, the collection would not include them all, but only those which have been recorded in writing for recital to the people; for when I saw, in our own times, frequent signs of divine powers similar to those of old, I desired to have such records made, lest such things perish from the minds of many men. It is not yet two years since there began to be a shrine of St Stephen at Hippo Regius; and though many of the miracles wrought there have not, to my certain knowledge, been recorded, those which have been published come to almost seventy in number at the time of writing. At Calama, where such a shrine was established first, and where such things are recorded in writing more often, there are incomparably more.

Uzali is a colony near Utica; and we have learnt of many wonderful miracles wrought there by the same martyr, whose shrine was established there by the bishop Evodius long before we had one at Hippo. But it is not customary to publish written accounts of such miracles there – or, rather, it was not customary, for the practice may now possibly have begun. For when I was there a short while ago, a lady of great distinction, Petronia, had been miraculously healed of a serious and protracted illness which all medical help had

failed to alleviate. At the desire of the above-named bishop of the place, I exhorted her to publish an account of it that might be read to the people, and she very readily complied. She included in her account a circumstance which, even though I am compelled to hasten on to more pressing aspects of this work, I cannot omit to mention.

She says that she was persuaded by a certain Jew to thread a ring on a circlet of hair and to wear this against her bare skin, under all her clothes. Instead of a jewel, this ring had a stone which had been found in the kidney of an ox. Equipped with this supposed remedy, she set off for the threshold of the martyr's shrine; but, after leaving Carthage, she stopped at a house of hers by the river Bagrada. As she was rising to continue her journey, she saw the ring lying at her feet. In great surprise, she examined the circlet of hair. When she found it still tied quite firmly with knots, as it had been, she suspected that the ring must have worn through and fallen off; but she found that the ring itself was also perfectly intact. And so she inferred from this great wonder that she had somehow received an indication that she was to be healed. Untying the circlet, therefore, she cast both it and the ring into the river.

Those who do not believe this do not believe either that the Lord Jesus came forth from His mother leaving her virginity intact, or that He entered among His disciples when the doors were closed. But let them make careful enquiry into this story, and if they find it true, let them believe the others also. The lady is a person of great quality, nobly born and nobly married; she dwells at Carthage. So distinguished a person dwelling in so distinguished a city will not suffer the truth to remain hidden from those who seek it. It is certain that the martyr himself, by whose intervention she was made whole, believed in the Son of a mother who remained a virgin, and in One who came in to His disciples through closed doors. Above all – and this is the point of all that I have so far said – he believed in One Who ascended into heaven in the flesh in which He had risen from the dead. And the reason why such great things are now done through the agency of this martyr is precisely that he laid down his life for his faith.

Even now, therefore, many miracles are wrought by the same God Who wrought those of which we read, acting by whom He wills and as He wills. But they are not as well known as the former

ones, nor are they beaten into the memory by frequent reading, like gravel into a path, so that they cannot pass out of the mind. Even where care is taken to read to the people the written accounts of those who receive such blessings – and we have now begun to do this at Hippo – those who are present hear the story only once, and many are not present. In any case, those who were present do not retain in their minds what they have heard for more than a few days, and scarcely anyone is found who can tell what he has heard to one whom he knows to have been absent.

But there was one miracle wrought among us which, though no greater than the ones already mentioned, was nonetheless so clear and glorious that I suppose there is no one in all Hippo who did not either see it or hear of it, and none who could possibly forget it. There was a family of ten – seven brothers and three sisters – from Caesarea in Cappadocia. They were not unworthy members of their city, but they had done some wrong to their mother, recently left destitute by the death of their father, and she, in great bitterness, had cursed them. They were chastised with a divine punishment so grievous that they were seized with a horrible shaking in all their limbs. Unable, while in this dreadful condition, to bear the stares of their fellow citizens, they wandered over almost every part of the Roman world, each taking whatever direction he liked. Two of them came to Hippo, a brother and sister, Paulus and Palladia, already known in many other places by the report of their miserable condition. It was some fifteen days before Easter when they arrived, and they frequented the church daily, and especially the shrine of the most glorious Stephen, where they prayed that God might now be appeased and restore them to their former health. There, and wherever else they went, the gaze of the whole city was turned on them. Some, who had seen them elsewhere, took whatever occasion they could to explain their plight to others. Easter came. On the Sunday morning, when there was already a large crowd present, the young man was clinging to the railings of the holy place where the martyr's relics are kept, praying. Suddenly, he fell on his face and lay still as if sleeping, but without trembling as he usually did even when asleep. All present were astonished. Some were afraid; others were moved with pity. Some wished to lift him up; others prevented them, and said that they should instead wait and see what would happen next. Then, behold, he arose! He was

not trembling, for he was cured, and he stood there whole, gazing back at those who gazed at him!

Who at that point could restrain himself from praising God? The whole Church was filled in every part with voices crying out in thanksgiving. They ran to where I was sitting, waiting for the procession to begin: they rushed in one after another, each one telling me, as if it were something new, what the one before had already said. I was giving my own joyful thanks to God when the young man himself came in with several others. He fell at my knees, and then rose to receive my kiss. We went into the congregation; the church was full, and resounding with shouts of joy: 'Thanks be to God! Praise be to God!' No one was silent; the cries came from all sides. I greeted the people; they replied with even more fervent shouts. Silence fell at last, and the appointed passages from the Divine Scriptures were read. Then, when we came to the point at which I would usually have preached a sermon, for the time being I said only a few words appropriate to so joyful and happy an occasion. For I desired them not to listen to me, but rather to reflect upon the eloquence of God, as it were, evinced in this divine work. The man ate with us, and carefully told us the story of the calamity which had befallen himself, his brothers and sisters, and their mother. On the following day, after the sermon, I promised that a written account of this story would be made and read to the people. This was done three days after Easter Sunday, when I made the brother and sister stand on the steps of the pulpit, just below the place from which I used to speak, while their story was read out.

The whole congregation, of both sexes, saw the brother standing without any abnormal movement while the sister shook in every limb. Those who had not seen what the divine mercy had wrought in him now observed it from seeing his sister. They saw what they had to give thanks for in his case, and what they had to pray for in hers. Meanwhile, the reading being now over, I instructed them to withdraw from the gaze of the people, and I had begun to discourse somewhat more carefully on the matter, when, behold, as I did so, other voices were heard coming from the shrine of the martyr, shouting out new cries of thanksgiving. Those who had been listening to me turned and began to run to the spot. The sister, when she had come down from the steps where she had been standing, had gone to pray at the holy martyr's shrine, and as soon as she

touched the railings she also fell down as if asleep, and stood up healed. While, therefore, we were asking what had happened and what was the reason for these sounds of rejoicing, they came back with her into the basilica where we were, leading her healed from the martyr's shrine. Then, indeed, such a shout of wonder arose from both sexes that it seemed that the cries and tears would never cease. She was led to the place where, a little while before, she had stood trembling. Those who had then mourned that she remained unlike her brother now rejoiced that she was like him. They perceived that, even though they had not yet poured out their prayers for her, their initial wish had been heard most swiftly. They exulted in praise of God with wordless shouts, with such a noise that our ears could hardly stand it. And what was in the hearts of those people as they rejoiced but the faith of Christ, for which Stephen had shed his blood?

9 That all the miracles wrought by the martyrs in
Christ's name bear witness to the faith which the
martyrs had in Christ

To what do these miracles bear witness if not to the faith which proclaims Christ risen in the flesh and ascended with His flesh into heaven? For the martyrs themselves were martyrs – that is, witnesses – to the faith, bringing upon themselves by their witness the greatest hostility and cruelty in the world, and conquering not by resisting it, but by dying. For this faith they died; and now they can ask boons of the Lord in Whose name they were slain. For the sake of this faith, they put their wondrous endurance before all else, so that the great power manifested in these miracles might follow. For if the resurrection of the flesh to eternal life had not already been accomplished in Christ, or is not to be accomplished in time to come, as foretold by Christ, or by the prophets who foretold that Christ was to come, why are those who were slain for that faith which proclaims the resurrection now able to do such great things? Sometimes God performs these miracles Himself, in that wondrous fashion by which, though Himself eternal, He produces temporal effects. Sometimes He performs them through His servants; and when He does this He sometimes acts through the spirits of the martyrs, just as He does also through men who are still in the body;

and sometimes He does all these things by the agency of angels, over whom He exercises an invisible, immutable, incorporeal authority, so that what is said to be done by the martyrs is not done by their act, but by their prayer and petition. Thus, some things are done in one way, others in another, and mortals can in no way comprehend this. But all such miracles nonetheless bear witness to that faith which preaches the resurrection of the flesh to life eternal.

10 That the martyrs who obtain many miracles in order that the true God may be worshipped are much worthier of honour than the demons, who perform certain marvels only so that they themselves may be thought to be gods

Here, perhaps, our adversaries will say that their own gods have also done some marvellous things. It is, at any rate, well that they should now begin to compare their gods to our dead men; for will they now admit that they have taken some of their gods from among dead men: Hercules and Romulus, for example, and many others whom they believe to have been received into the number of the gods? But our martyrs are not gods; for we know only one God, Who is the God both of us and of the martyrs. Nor are the miracles wrought at the shrines of the martyrs at all similar to those which our adversaries claim to have been wrought in their temples. Even if they are similar in appearance, their gods have been vanquished by our martyrs as Pharaoh's magicians were by Moses.³⁰ For the demons perform their wonders with an impure pride like that with which they have desired to be gods; but the martyrs perform theirs – or, rather, God performs them while they work with Him and pray – in order to strengthen the faith by which we believe not that they are our gods, but that both they and we have one God. In short, our adversaries have built temples for their gods, established altars, instituted priesthoods and offered sacrifices; but we, in honour of our martyrs, do not make temples, as if to gods, but memorial shrines, as to men who are dead, but whose spirits live with God. We do not erect altars in those shrines upon which we may sacrifice to the martyrs, but to the one God of the martyrs and

³⁰ Exod. 8, *passim*.

of ourselves. During this sacrifice, they are named, in their own place and order, as men of God who have conquered the world by confessing Him; but they are not invoked by the priest who offers the sacrifice. For it is to God that he sacrifices, not to them, even though he sacrifices at their shrine; for he is God's priest, not theirs. The sacrifice itself, indeed, is the Body of Christ, which is not offered to them, because they themselves are that Body.

Who, then, can more easily be believed to work miracles? Those who wish themselves to be held as gods by those for whom they work miracles, or those who perform whatever wonders they perform so that men shall believe in the God Who is also Christ? Those who have desired to have their own crimes made into sacred rites, or those who do not desire to have even their own praises included in such rites, but wish to have everything for which they are rightly praised offered up to the glory of Him in Whom they are praised? For in the Lord their souls are praised.³¹ Let us, therefore, believe those who both speak the truth and work wonders. For by speaking the truth they suffered, and so became able to work wonders. And the foremost truth to which they bear witness is that Christ rose from the dead, and first showed in His own flesh the immortality of the resurrection which He promised should be ours, either at the beginning of the world to come, or at the end of this.

11 Against the Platonists, who argue from the weight of the elements that an earthly body cannot dwell in heaven

But those reasoners 'whose thoughts the Lord knows that they are vain'³² argue against this great gift of God, appealing to the weight of the elements. For they have learnt from their master Plato that the two greatest elements of the world, and the farthest removed from one another, earth and heaven, are coupled and conjoined by two intermediate elements, namely, air and water.³³ The first element, then, beginning with the lowest, is earth; the second is water, which is above earth; the third is air, which is above water;

³¹ Cf. Psalm 34,3 (LXX).

³² Psalm 94,11.

³³ Cf. Plato, *Tim.* 32A.

and the fourth is heaven, which is above air. For this reason, they say, it follows that an earthly body cannot exist in heaven, since each single element is balanced by its own weight, and each keeps to its own place. Behold the kind of arguments by which human infirmity, consumed with vanity, speaks against the omnipotence of God! How is it that there are so many bodies in the air, since the air is the third element from the earth? God has granted to the earthly bodies of birds that they may be borne through the air by the lightness of feathers and wings. Are we to suppose, then, that He has not been able to give to the bodies of men made immortal the power to abide in the highest heaven? Again, those earthly animals which cannot fly, including men, surely ought to live under the earth, just as the fishes – the water animals – live under the water. Why, therefore, can an earthly animal not live in the second element – that is, in water – while it can in the third? Why is it that, although it belongs to the earth, it is suffocated at once if it is compelled to live in the element next above the earth, and yet lives in, and cannot live without, the third? Is there an error here in the order of the elements? Or is it, perhaps, not the natural order of things which is here deficient, but the arguments of our adversaries? I here refrain from saying again what I have already said in the thirteenth book: that many heavy earthly substances, such as lead, can receive a form from a craftsman which enables them to float in water.³⁴ Are we to deny, then, that the human body may receive from the Almighty Artist a property which will enable it to be borne up to heaven and to dwell there?

If the Platonists now reflect upon what I said in that earlier passage, they cannot derive any answer at all from that order of the elements in which they place such trust. For if that order is such that earth is first, water second, air third and heaven fourth, then the soul is above them all. For Aristotle says that the soul is a fifth kind of body, and Plato says that it is not a body at all.³⁵ If it were a fifth kind of body, then certainly it would be above the rest; and if it is not a body at all, then so much the more does it rise above everything else. What, therefore, does it do in an earthly body? What does it do in a mass of matter, given that it is more rarefied

³⁴ Cf. Bk XIII, 18.

³⁵ Cf. Cicero, *Tusc. disp.*, 1, 27, 65; Aristotle, *De anima*, 2, 2; Augustine, *De gen. ad lit.*, 7, 21.

than anything else? What does that which is lighter than anything else do with such weight? What does that which is swifter than anything else do with such sluggishness? Will not the body be lifted up to heaven by virtue of so excellent a nature? For the time being, the natural substance of earthly bodies is able to restrain the soul here below; but will not the soul eventually be able to lift up the earthly body on high?

If we come now to our adversaries' own miracles, wrought by their gods, which they cite in opposition to our martyrs, will not even these be found to work for our cause and to be entirely profitable to us? For among the other great miracles of their gods, that certainly is a great one which Varro mentions of a Vestal Virgin, who, placed in peril by a false accusation of unchastity, filled a sieve with water from the Tiber and carried it to her judges without any part of it leaking away. But who held that weight of water in the sieve? Who was it who did not permit any of it to pour out onto the ground through so many open holes? Our adversaries will reply, 'Some god, or some demon.' If a god, then, is he greater than the God Who made this world? If a demon, is he mightier than an angel who serves the God by Whom the world was made? If, therefore, a lesser god or angel or demon could support the weight of this moist element in such a way that the water might seem to have changed its nature, will not Almighty God, Who created all the elements, be able to take away the weight of the earthly body, so that the quickened body will dwell in whatever element the quickening Spirit wills?

Again, since the Platonists place air between the fire above and the water beneath, how is it that we so often find air between water and water, and between water and earth? What do they make of the fact that air is found between water-filled clouds and the sea? Again, by what weight and order of the elements, I ask, does it happen that the most violent and stormy torrents of water hang in the clouds above the earth before they are dashed down upon the earth under the air? In short, why is it that, in whatever direction the world extends, air is found between the highest heaven and the naked earth, if its place is between heaven and water, just as the place of water is between air and earth?

According to Plato, therefore, the order of the elements is disposed in such a way that the two extremes, fire and earth, are con-

nected by two intermediaries, air and water, with fire situated in the highest part of the heavens and earth at the lowest part of the world, as a kind of foundation for it; and therefore earth cannot be in the heavens. Finally, then: if this is so, how can fire itself be on the earth? For, according to this reasoning, these two elements, earth and fire, should be confined to their proper places, the highest and lowest respectively, so that neither the lowest can rise up to the place of the highest, nor the highest sink to that of the lowest. Thus, just as the Platonists suppose that no particle of earth is or ever will be found in heaven, so should we see no particle of fire on earth. In fact, however, it does exist, not only on the earth, but even under it, so that the tops of mountains belch it forth. Furthermore, we see that it exists on earth for human purposes, and that it even arises from earth, since it is produced from wood and stones, which are without doubt earthly bodies. But, our adversaries say, the heavenly fire is tranquil, pure, harmless, everlasting; whereas earthly fire is turbid, smoky, corruptible and corrupting. But it does not corrupt the mountains and caverns of the earth in which it rages continually. Moreover, even if earthly fire is unlike the other in a manner consistent with its earthly dwelling-places, why, in this case, do they refuse to let us believe that earthly bodies will presently be made incorruptible and fit for heaven, just as fire is now made corruptible and fit for earth? The Platonists therefore infer nothing from the weights and order of the elements which shows that Almighty God cannot make our bodies such that they can dwell in the heavens.

12 Against the slanders by which unbelievers revile the Christians' belief in the resurrection of the body

Our adversaries often examine our faith in the resurrection of the body with great care, and then ridicule it by asking whether abortions will rise again; or, because the Lord said, 'Verily I say unto you, not a hair of your head shall perish',³⁶ they ask if all bodies will have the same size and strength, or whether there are to be differences in size. If they are to be all the same, will abortive births, when they rise again, have the bodily size that they never had here? Or if abortions do not rise again, because they were not born but

³⁶ Luke 21,18.

wasted, our adversaries then transfer the same question to little children, and ask how they will acquire the stature which, as we see, they did not have when they died at so early an age. (For we will not say that those little children will not rise again; for, having been born, they are capable of being reborn.) Then, further, our adversaries ask in what way our bodies will be equal. For if each is to receive back at the resurrection what he had here, and if all are to be as large and tall as the largest and tallest are now, how is it, they ask, that not only children but most other people as well will then receive what they lacked here? The apostle says that we shall all come to the 'measure of the age of the fullness of Christ';³⁷ and he speaks also of those 'Whom He predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son'.³⁸ But if we understand this to mean that the bodies of all those who are to be in Christ's kingdom will be of the same stature and size as His, then, say our adversaries, the size and height of the bodies of many must be diminished. And if the bodies of so many are thus to be reduced in size, what becomes of the saying, 'Not a hair of your head shall perish'?

Again, as to the hair itself, it might be asked whether all that the barber has ever cut off is to be restored. If it is to be restored, who would not be appalled at such deformity? And it seems that the same thing necessarily applies to what has been clipped from the nails: that what has been cut off will be replaced on the body; in which case, what will be left of the body's beauty, which, surely, ought to be much greater in that immortal condition than it could be in this state of corruption? But if all this is not restored, it will therefore perish. In what sense, then, they ask, is it true that not a hair shall perish? And they argue similarly in respect of fatness and thinness. For if all are to be equal, then, clearly, it will no longer be the case that some are fat and others thin. But, in that case, some will be increased and others diminished, and so there will not be a restoration of what formerly existed; for some will receive what they did not have before, and others will lose what they had.

We come next to the corruption and dissolution of bodies. One is turned to dust; another evaporates into the air; some men are consumed by beasts and some by fire; while others perish by ship-

³⁷ Eph. 4,13.

³⁸ Rom. 8,29.

wreck, or by drowning in some other circumstances, so that their bodies decay and dissolve away into liquid. Our adversaries are disturbed by these facts in no small measure; for they cannot believe that all these scattered elements can be gathered together again and reconstructed into flesh. Moreover, they pursue the question of deformities and defects, whether accidental or present at birth, and speak with horror and derision of monstrous births, asking us if every deformity will be preserved at the resurrection. For if we say that no such things will then be present in the body of a man, they assume that they can rebut our answer by citing the marks of the wounds which we proclaim were found in the risen body of the Lord Christ.³⁹ But among all these puzzles, the most difficult question that they put to us is this: if one man, driven by hunger, eats and digests another, into whose body will that flesh return? – for it has been converted into the flesh of the man who made use of it as food, and it has made good those losses which famine had produced in him. Will it, therefore – and they ask this in order to make fun of our belief in the resurrection of the body – be restored to the man whose flesh it first was, or to him whose flesh it afterwards became? What they themselves offer to the human soul is either an alternation of true misery and false happiness, according to Plato; or, according to Porphyry, the promise that, after passing through many different bodies, it will end its miseries and never return to them again: not, however, by obtaining an immortal body, but by escaping from any kind of body whatsoever.⁴⁰

13 Whether abortions, if they are numbered among the dead, are to have a part in the resurrection

If God in His mercy will assist my efforts, then, I will now answer those arguments of our adversaries which seem to tell against our belief.

As to aborted foetuses, which were alive in their mother's womb but have died there, I do not venture either to affirm or deny that they will rise again. I do not, however, see why, if they are not excluded from the number of the dead, they should not share in

³⁹ Cf. John 20,25ff.

⁴⁰ Cf. Plato, *Rep.*, 619D; *Phaedrus*, 249A; *Bkx*,29; 30; *Bk xii*,27.

the resurrection of the dead. For either not all the dead shall rise, and some human souls will be without bodies for eternity, although they once had human bodies, even if only in their mother's womb; or, if all human souls are to receive again the bodies which they had wherever they lived, and which they relinquished when they died, then I do not see how I can say that even those who died in their mother's womb shall have no resurrection. But whatever anyone may believe concerning abortions, we must at all events apply to them, if they rise again, all that we have to say of infants who have been born.

14 Whether infants are to rise in the body that they would have had if they had reached maturity

What, therefore, are we to say of infants, if not that they will not rise in that tiny body in which they died, but will receive, by the wondrous and most rapid operation of God, that body which they would have received in any case by the slower passage of time? For in that utterance of the Lord, where He says that, 'Not a hair of your head shall perish', it is said that we shall not in future lack anything that we once had; but it is not said that we shall not then receive anything that we do not have now. The dead infant lacked the perfect stature of its body, for even the perfect infant lacks the perfection of bodily size because, unlike an adult, it has not yet achieved the greatest stature possible for it. There is, however, a sense in which this perfect stature is possessed by all when they are conceived and born: that is, they have it potentially, even though not yet in their actual size. In the same way, all the members of the body are latent in the seed, although some of them are lacking even after the child is born – teeth, for example, and things of that kind. Every material substance, then, seems to contain within itself what one might call a pattern of everything which does not yet exist – or, rather, which is as yet latent – but which in the course of time will come into existence, or, rather, into sight. In this sense, therefore, the child who is to be short or tall is short or tall already. According to this reasoning, then, we need fear no bodily loss in the resurrection of the body. Even if it is true that all are to be equal, so that all will attain the stature of giants, lest those who

were largest in this life should lose anything of their stature and it should perish (for this would go against the assurance of Christ, who said that not a hair of their head should perish): even in this case, why should the Creator, the wondrous Artist Who made all things from nothing, not be able to make the additions that He knew to be necessary?

15 Whether the bodies of all the dead are to be the same size as Christ's body when they rise

When He rose from the dead, Christ's bodily stature was undoubtedly the same as it had been when He died. Nor is it permitted to say that, when the time comes for all men to rise, His body will, for the sake of equalling the tallest, assume a magnitude which it did not have when He appeared to His disciples in the form in which they knew Him. But if we say that the bodies of those who were larger than the Lord are to be reduced to the size of His body, then a great deal of their substance will perish from the bodies of many, even though He promised that not a hair of their head should perish. Therefore, it remains for us to conclude that everyone will receive back his own size: the size which he had in youth, if he died an old man, or that which he would have had, if he died before attaining it. As for what the apostle said of the 'measure of the age of the fullness of Christ', we may understand this as referring to something else: namely, to the fact that the measure of the age of Christ will be completed when all the members among the Christian peoples are added to the Head. Alternatively, if the apostle was indeed speaking of the resurrection of the body, we may take him to mean that the bodies of all the dead will rise neither older nor younger than Christ, but at that age and vigour to which we know that Christ had attained. For the most learned men of this world have defined the prime of life as occurring at around the age of thirty years. When this period of time is over, a man begins to decline towards an increasingly infirm old age. Therefore the apostle was not referring to the measure of the body, or to the measure of stature, but to the 'measure of the age of the fullness of Christ'.

16 What is meant when it is said that the saints are to be 'conformed to the image of the Son of God'

Again, the apostle's words, 'Predestinate to be conformed to the image of the Son of God', may be understood according to the inner man. Hence in another place he says to us, 'Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed in the renewing of your mind.'⁴¹ In so far, then, as we are transformed in such a way as to be no longer conformed to this world, we are conformed to the Son of God. The apostle can also be taken to mean that, as Christ was conformed to us by mortality, so shall we be conformed to Him by immortality; and this, indeed, does have reference to the resurrection of the body. But if these words are also intended to instruct us as to the form of our risen bodies, then, as in the case of the 'measure', this conformity to Christ is to be understood not in terms of size, but of age.

So, then: all are to rise with a body of the same size as they had, or would have had, in the prime of life. But it would in any case be no hardship even if the form of the body were to be that of a child or an old man, provided that no infirmity of mind or body remained. Thus, even if someone contends that everyone will rise with the same kind of body as he had when he died, we need not devote too much effort to the task of arguing the point with him.

17 Whether the bodies of women will retain their sex in the resurrection

In view of the words, 'Till we all come to a perfect man, to the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ', and 'Conformed to the image of the Son of God', not a few people believe that women will not be resurrected as female in sex, but that all are to be men, because God made only man of earth, and the woman from the man. But it seems to me that the better opinion is that of those who do not doubt that both sexes are to rise. For then there will be no lust, which is now the cause of confusion. For before they sinned, the man and the woman were naked, and were not ashamed.⁴² Vice

⁴¹ Rom. 12,2.

⁴² Cf. Gen. 2,25.

will be taken away from those bodies, therefore, and nature preserved. And the sex of a woman is not a vice, but nature. They will then be exempt from sexual intercourse and childbearing, but the female parts will nonetheless remain in being, accommodated not to the old uses, but to a new beauty, which, so far from inciting lust, which no longer exists, will move us to praise the wisdom and clemency of God, Who both made what was not and redeemed from corruption what He made.

At the beginning of the human race, the woman was made from a rib taken from the man's side as he slept;⁴³ and this act was even then a fitting prophecy of Christ and the Church. For the man's sleep was the death of Christ, from Whose side, pierced with a spear as He hung lifeless upon the cross, there flowed forth water and blood, which we know to be the sacraments by which the Church is built up.⁴⁴ For Scripture uses this very word. We do not read, 'He formed', or 'He made', but 'He built her up [*aedificavit*] into a woman.'⁴⁵ So also the apostle speaks of the 'edifying of the body of Christ', which is the Church.⁴⁶ The woman, therefore, is the creation of God, just as the man is. But by the fact that she was made from the man's side unity is commended to us; and, as we have said, the manner of her creation prefigured Christ and the Church. He, then, who instituted two sexes will restore them both.

Again, Jesus Himself, when asked by the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, which of the seven brothers would have as his wife the woman whom each one of them had taken to raise up seed unto his departed brother, as the Law prescribed, replied, 'Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.' At this point, he might have said, 'She of whom you ask me will herself be a man, not a woman'; but He did not say this. Rather, He said, 'In the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.'⁴⁷ They will be equal to the angels in immortality and felicity, not in flesh, nor in the resurrection, of which the angels had no need, because they could not die. Thus, the Lord denied that there would be marriages in the resurrection,

⁴³ Cf. Gen. 2,21f.

⁴⁴ John 19,34.

⁴⁵ Gen. 2,22.

⁴⁶ Eph. 4,12.

⁴⁷ Matt. 22,29f.

not women. Moreover, He denied this when He could more easily and quickly have settled the point in question by denying that the female sex would then exist, had this indeed been foreknown by Him. Indeed, He even affirmed that the female sex will exist; for He said, 'They shall not be given in marriage', which applies to females, and 'Neither shall they marry', which applies to males. At the resurrection, therefore, there will still be those who, in this world, are wont to marry and be given in marriage, but they will not do so.

18 Of the perfect Man, that is, Christ; and of His body, that is, the Church, which is His fullness

Next, if we are to understand what the apostle means when he says that we shall all 'come to a perfect man', we must consider these words in the context of the whole passage, which is as follows:

He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things. And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come to the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect Man, to the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up to Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from Whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love.⁴⁸

Behold, then, what 'a perfect man' is: Head and body together, made up of all the members, which will be perfected in its own time. But new members are being added to this body daily, while the Church is being built up: the Church to whom it is said, 'Ye are the body of Christ and His members'; and, again, the apostle

⁴⁸ Eph. 4,10ff.

says, 'For His body's sake, which is the Church';⁴⁹ and again, 'We being many are one bread, one body.'⁵⁰ It is of the building up of this body that it is here also said, 'For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edification of the body of Christ'. Then comes that passage with which we are now dealing: 'Till we all come to the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ', and so on. The apostle then shows us of what body we are to understand this to be the measure, saying: 'That we may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from Whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part'. As, therefore, there is a measure of every part, so there is also of the whole body, which consists of all its parts; and this latter is clearly the measure of its fullness, of which it is said, 'To the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ'. This fullness the apostle spoke of also in the place where he says of Christ, 'And gave Him to be the head of all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all'.⁵¹

Suppose, however, that the 'perfect man' passage is indeed meant as a reference to the form in which each of us is to rise: even in this case, what is to prevent us from understanding the word 'man', here used instead of 'person', as applying to the woman also? For in the saying, 'Blessed is the man who feareth the Lord',⁵² women who fear the Lord are surely also included.

19 That all blemishes of the body which now detract from human beauty will be removed at the resurrection. The natural substance of the body will remain, but it will be altered in quality and quantity so as to produce beauty

What reply shall I now make concerning the hair and nails? Once it is understood that no part of the body will perish in such a way

⁴⁹ 1 Cor. 12,27.

⁵⁰ 1 Cor. 10,17.

⁵¹ Eph. 1,22f.

⁵² Psalm 112,1.

as to cause any bodily deformity, it will at the same time be understood that any bodily substance which would have given rise to deformity by its great quantity will be added to the body's total mass, but not to parts the form of which would thereby be spoiled. After all, suppose that, having made a clay pot, one were then to make it all over again, using the same clay, with the whole of the clay making up the whole of the new pot, with nothing left over: it would not be necessary to remake the handle out of the same portion of clay which had formed the old handle, or the new bottom out of that which had formed the old bottom. Thus, if hair which has been cut and nails which have been trimmed would constitute a deformity if they were restored to the same places, they will not be restored. Nothing will perish at the resurrection, however, for every part of the body's substance will be restored to it, but altered in a way which is in keeping with the various parts of the body.

Moreover, what the Lord said, 'Not a hair of your head shall perish', might more aptly be understood as referring to the number of hairs, not to their length. Hence, He elsewhere says, 'The hairs of your head are all numbered.'⁵³ I do not say this because I think that anything which is naturally present in the body will perish. Rather, I believe that whatever deformity was present in it (and such deformity is present for no other reason than to show the penal condition under which mortal men exist) will be restored in such a way that, while the integrity of the body's substance is preserved, the deformity will perish. If an artist has for some reason made a flawed statue, he can recast it and make it beautiful, removing the defect without losing any of the substance. If there was some unbecoming disproportion in some part of the original figure, or something not in keeping with the rest, he does not have to cut it off or separate it from the whole. Rather, he can simply melt down the whole and remix it, without producing any ugliness or diminishing the quantity of material. And if a man can do this, what are we to think of the Almighty Artist? Will He not be able to remove and abolish all deformities of the human body, whether common ones or rare and monstrous, which, though in keeping with this wretched life, are not consistent with the future happiness of the saints? And will He not be able to do so in the same way that our natural but

⁵³ Luke 12,17.

ugly excretions are removed, without any diminution of the body's substance?

For this reason, let neither fat persons nor thin ones fear that their appearance at the resurrection will be other than they would have wished it to be here if they could. For all bodily beauty consists in the suitable arrangement of the parts, together with a certain pleasantness of colour. Where there is not a suitable arrangement of the parts, this is displeasing either because something is lacking, or is too small or too large. But the deformity which arises when there is not a proper arrangement of parts will not exist in heaven. There, all defects will be corrected. Whatever is less than fitting will be made good from resources which the Creator knows. Whatever is more than fitting will be removed, but without prejudice to the integrity of the body's substance. As for pleasantness of colour, how great will this be where 'the just shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father'!⁵⁴ We must believe that this brightness was not lacking in Christ's body when He rose, but was concealed from the eyes of the disciples. For the infirmity of human vision could not bear it, though it was fitting for them to look upon Him so that they might know Him. For the same reason, He showed them the marks of His wounds, that they might touch them; and He ate and drank, not because He needed nourishment, but because He had the power to take it. Now when an object, though present, is invisible to those who see other things which are present – as in the case of this brightness, which was present but invisible to those who saw other things – this is called in Greek *aorásia*, a word which is rendered as 'blindness' in the Book of Genesis by our translators, who could not find a better word. The men of Sodom suffered such blindness, when they sought the door of the righteous Lot and could not find it.⁵⁵ But if their condition had been true blindness, so that they could see nothing, they would have asked for guides to lead them away, not for a door to give them entry to a house.

I do not know why this is so, but the love we bear for the blessed martyrs makes us desire to see in the kingdom of heaven the marks of the wounds which they received for Christ's name; and it may be that we shall indeed see them. For this will not be a deformity,

⁵⁴ Matt. 13,43.

⁵⁵ Cf. Gen. 19,11.

but a badge of honour, and the beauty of their virtue – a beauty which is in the body, but not of the body – will shine forth in it. But those martyrs who have had limbs hacked off and taken away will not lack those limbs at the resurrection of the dead; for it was said to them, ‘Not a hair of your head shall perish.’ It may be that, in that world to come, it will be fitting for them to exhibit some marks of their glorious wounds, still visible in their immortal flesh. If so, however, the places where they have been struck or cut will retain the scars, but the limbs which were cut off will not be lost, but restored. While, therefore, no blemishes which the body has sustained will be present in the world to come, we are nonetheless not to deem these marks of virtue blemishes, or call them such.

20 That in the resurrection, the substance of our
bodies, no matter how widely dispersed, will be
entirely reunited

As for bodies which have been consumed by wild beasts or by fire, or which have collapsed into dust and ashes, or dissolved into liquid or evaporated into the air: God forbid that we should suppose that the omnipotence of the Creator cannot revive them all and restore them to life! God forbid that we should think that whatever is concealed from our senses in the most secret recesses of nature can also escape the knowledge or elude the power of the Creator! So great a Roman author as Cicero, wishing to define God as accurately as he could, said, ‘God is a mind, unbound and free, remote from all materiality and mortality, perceiving and moving all things, and itself endowed with eternal movement.’⁵⁶ He found this definition in the doctrines of the greatest philosophers. Let me ask, then, in their own terms, how can anything either lie hidden from Him Who perceives all things, or irrevocably escape Him Who moves all things?

We come now to that question which seems to be more difficult than all the rest: to whom will the flesh of a dead man be restored at the resurrection if it has been made into the flesh of a living one? Suppose that someone, consumed and compelled by hunger, has eaten the bodies of men. This dreadful thing has sometimes hap-

⁵⁶ Cicero, *Tusc. disp.*, 1,27,66.

pened, as the history of ancient times attests and as we are taught by the unhappy experiences of our own day.⁵⁷ And could anyone contend, with truth or reason, that the whole of a body so eaten simply passes through the digestive tract without any of it being changed or converted into the flesh of the eater? The mere fact that the eater was thin and is no longer so shows clearly enough that what he lacked has now been made good by such food.

But the remarks which I have made already should be enough to untie this knot also. For, clearly, all the flesh which hunger has removed from the starving man will have evaporated into the air; and, as we have said, Almighty God has power to recall what has thus fled. The flesh of the man who was eaten, therefore, will be restored to him in whom it first began to be human flesh. For it must be regarded as borrowed, as it were, by the person who ate him, and, like a loan of money, it must be repaid. The eater's own flesh, however, which he has lost through hunger, will be restored to him by Him Who can recall even what has evaporated. Indeed, even if it had perished entirely, so that no part of its substance remained in any hidden place of nature, the Almighty could still restore it by such means as He willed. For the Truth has said, 'Not a hair of your head shall perish'; and, in view of this saying, it would be absurd if we were to suppose that, though no hair of a man's head can perish, large pieces of his flesh can perish because eaten and consumed by the starving.

Thus, having considered and discussed all these things within the small compass available to us, we reach the following conclusion: that at the resurrection of the flesh to eternity, the body will have that size which it either attained in the prime of its life or would have attained had it achieved the pattern implanted in it; and it will also have the beauty which arises from preserving the appropriate arrangement of all its parts. Moreover, it is not absurd to suppose that, for the sake of preserving this beauty, any part of the body's substance which, concentrated in one place, would give rise to a deformity by reason of excessive size will be redistributed throughout the whole. In this way, neither any part, nor the proper arrangement of the whole will be lost, but only the general stature of the

⁵⁷ According to St Jerome (*Epist.* 127,12), it had happened during Alaric's siege of Rome (409-10), and this is probably what Augustine has in mind here.

body somewhat increased by the distribution in all the parts of that which would have been unsightly if concentrated in one place. Alternatively, if it be contended that, at the resurrection, each man will have the same stature as that of the body in which he departed this life, there is no need fiercely to resist this argument, provided, however, that there is to be no deformity, no infirmity, no heaviness, no corruption – nothing of any kind unfit for that kingdom in which the sons of the resurrection and of the promise⁵⁸ are to be equal to the angels of God, if not in body and age, then certainly in felicity.

21 Of the new spiritual body into which the flesh of the saints will be changed

Whatever has perished from the living body, therefore, or from the corpse after death, will be restored. Simultaneously with what has remained in the grave, it will rise again, changed from the oldness of the animal body into the newness of the spiritual body, and clothed in incorruption and immortality. Even if the body has been completely ground to powder in some dreadful accident, or by the ferocity of enemies; even if it has been so entirely scattered to the winds or into the water that there is nothing whatever left of it: still it cannot be in any way withdrawn from the omnipotence of the Creator; rather, not a hair of its head shall perish. The flesh will then be spiritual, and subject to the spirit; but it will still be flesh and not spirit, just as the spirit, even when carnal and subject to the flesh, is still spirit and not flesh.

We have experience of this latter condition in the deformity of our present penal state. For those persons were carnal not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit, to whom the apostle said, 'I could not speak to you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal.'⁵⁹ And even when a man is called spiritual in this life, he nonetheless remains carnal in body, and sees another law in his members warring against the law of his mind.⁶⁰ But he will be spiritual even in body when the same flesh rises again, and what is written has come

⁵⁸ Cf. Luke 20,37; Gal. 4,28.

⁵⁹ 1 Cor. 3,1.

⁶⁰ Cf. Rom. 7,23.

to pass: 'It is sown an animal body, it shall rise a spiritual body.'⁶¹ But no experience that we have yet had enables us to know what the nature of that spiritual body and the extent of its grace will be; and so it would, I fear, be rash to offer any description of it.

For the sake of praising God, however, we cannot remain silent as to the joy of our hope; and it is from the inmost heart of one aflame with holy love that these words come: 'O Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy house.'⁶² With God's help, then, we may endeavour to infer from the blessings which God bestows upon good men and bad alike in this most troublous life how great will be that joy which we certainly have no power to describe, because we have not yet experienced it. For I say nothing of the time when God made man righteous – I say nothing of the happy life of the man and his wife in the fruitfulness of Paradise; for this was so brief that none of their offspring came to any awareness of it. But who can describe the tokens of God's goodness granted to the human race even in this life which we know, and in which we now are, from the temptations of which we cannot escape for as long as we are in it, no matter what progress we may make, for it is all temptation.⁶³

**22 Of the miseries and ills to which, thanks to the
first sin, the human race is now justly subject, and
from which no one can be delivered other than by
the grace of Christ**

This life itself, if it is to be called a life, attests, by the many great evils with which it is filled, that the whole mortal progeny of the first man stands condemned. What could show this more clearly than that dreadful and profound ignorance from which springs all the error which imprisons the sons of Adam in a dark place from which no man can be delivered without toil, pain and fear? Is this not proved by his love of so many vain and harmful things, from which come gnawing cares, disturbances, griefs, fears, insane joys, discords, litigation, wars, treasons, angers, hatreds, falsehood, flattery, fraud, theft, rapine, perfidy, pride, ambition, envy, homicides,

⁶¹ 1 Cor. 15,44.

⁶² Psalm 26,8.

⁶³ Cf. Job 7,1 (LXX).

parricides, cruelty, ferocity, wickedness, luxury, insolence, immodesty, unchastity, fornications, adulteries, incests, and so many other impure and unnatural acts of both sexes of which it is shameful even to speak: sacrileges, heresies, blasphemies, perjuries, oppression of the innocent, slanders, plots, prevarications, false witness, unrighteous judgments, acts of violence, robberies, and other such evils which do not immediately come to mind, but which are never far away from men in this life? Truly, these are the crimes of wicked men; yet they come forth from that root of error and perverse love which is born with every son of Adam. For who does not know how great is our ignorance of the truth, manifesting itself even in infancy? Who does not know with what an abundance of vain desires, beginning to appear in boyhood, a man comes into this life? So true is this that, if a man were left to live as he wished and do whatever he liked, he would fall into all, or certainly into many, of those crimes and iniquities which I mentioned and could not mention.

But the Divine governance does not wholly forsake those whom it condemns, nor does God shut up His tender mercies in anger;⁶⁴ and, for this reason, His prohibition and instruction stand guard over the senses of the human race and repel those forces of darkness to which we were born subject. But such prohibition and instruction are themselves full of toil and sorrow. Why are so many different threats needed to restrain the folly of even little children? Why are there pedagogues, masters, the rod, the strap, the cane, the discipline which Holy Scripture says must be given to a beloved child, 'beating him on the sides lest he wax stubborn',⁶⁵ lest he become so wild and hardened that it is hardly possible, or perhaps impossible, to subdue him? Why are all these painful things necessary, if not to overcome ignorance and bridle wicked desires: the evils with which we come into this world? Why is it that we remember with such difficulty, but forget so easily? Why is it that we learn with such difficulty, yet so easily remain ignorant? Why is it that we are vigorous with such difficulty, yet so easily inert? Does it not appear clearly from all this what our fallen nature readily and promptly tends to, as if by its own weight, and what aid it needs if it is to

⁶⁴ Cf. Psalm 77,10.

⁶⁵ Ecclus. 30,12.

be redeemed? Idleness, dilatoriness, indolence, negligence, are vices which shun labour, since labour, though useful, is itself a punishment.

But, apart from the punishments of childhood, without which children cannot learn what their elders wish them to – although they seldom wish them to learn anything useful – who can describe in any discourse, who can comprehend in any process of thought, the number and severity of the punishments which disturb the human race in general? These punishments do not merely befall the malice and iniquity of the wicked, but belong to the condition of misery common to us all. What fear and distress accompany widowhood and mourning, injury and condemnation, the deceptions and lies of men, false accusations, and all the violent crimes and wicked deeds of others! For at their hands we often suffer degradation and captivity, chains and imprisonment, exile and torture, the hewing off of limbs, the deprivation of the senses, the oppression of the body to satisfy the lust of the oppressor, and many other horrible evils. What? Do not innumerable other evils also threaten our bodies from without? For there is heat and cold; tempest, rain and flood; lightning, thunder and hail; earthquakes and the opening up of chasms in the earth; the possibility of being crushed under falling buildings; accidents arising out of the fear or malice of domestic animals; from so many poisons in berries, water, air, beasts; from the painful, or even fatal, bites of wild creatures; from the madness which a rabid dog communicates, so that even that animal which is more gentle and affectionate towards its master than any other is feared more vehemently and bitterly than a lion or a dragon, and the man whom it has happened to infect with this dreadful contagion becomes so mad that his parents, wife and children dread him more than any beast. What evils are suffered by seafarers and by those who travel by land! Who can go out of his own house without being everywhere exposed to unforeseen misfortunes? Returning from the forum to his house healthy in limb, a man falls down, breaks a leg, and the injury costs him his life! What can seem safer than a man sitting down? Eli the priest fell off his chair and died!⁶⁶ How many accidents do farmers – or, rather, all men – fear that crops may suffer from the weather, or the soil, or

⁶⁶ Cf. I Sam. 4,18.

harmful animals? As a rule, they feel safe when the crops are gathered in and stored. Yet, as we know, sudden floods have sometimes put the workmen to flight and swept the finest harvest out of the barns and destroyed it.

Can anyone trust in his own innocence as a defence against the incursions of various demons? Let no one do so, indeed; for even baptised infants, who are certainly nothing if not innocent, are sometimes so vexed by demons that God, by permitting this, teaches us thereby to bewail the calamities of this life, and to desire the happiness of the life to come.

Again, ills arising from the diseases which afflict the body itself are so numerous that all the books of the physicians cannot contain them. Also, in many cases – indeed, in almost all – the treatment and the medicine are tortures in themselves, so that patients are saved from a painful end only by a painful cure. Have not men been led by burning thirst to drink human urine, and even their own? Has not hunger driven men to such a pitch that they have been unable to restrain themselves from eating human flesh? – and not only that of men found dead, but even that of men slain by them for this very purpose; and not only of strangers: mothers have devoured their own children when driven to such incredible cruelty by the frantic desire for food. Finally, even sleep itself, which properly receives the name of rest, is often made unquiet by visions and dreams. Who can describe in words how the wretched soul and the senses are thus disturbed by terrors, great even though false: terrors exhibited and displayed in such a way that we cannot distinguish them from what is real? Men suffering from certain diseases, or under the influence of certain poisons, are miserably disturbed by false visions even when awake. Also, even men in good health are nonetheless sometimes deceived by the trickery of malign demons under a remarkable variety of false appearances. They produce these delusions simply because they desire to confuse the senses of their victims even if they cannot manage to seduce them to their side.

This is a state of life so miserable that it is like a hell on earth; and there is no escape from it other than through the grace of Christ, our Saviour, God and Lord. The very name Jesus shows this, for it means Saviour; and what He saves us from most of all is a life after this one which is more miserable still: an eternal life

which is more like death than life. In our present life, holy men and holy occupations bring us great solace, but the blessings for which men pray are not always conferred upon them; and this is so that religion shall not be sought merely for the sake of such blessings and not for the sake of that other life in which there will be no evil whatsoever. But grace indeed assists good men in encountering the evils of this life, so that they are able to bear them with a fortitude as great as their faith is strong.

The wise men of this world say that philosophy also is of profit in this respect: the true philosophy which, according to Cicero, the gods have bestowed only upon the few. He says that the gods have never given, nor could they ever give, a greater gift to men than this.⁶⁷ Thus, even those against whom we are arguing are compelled to admit, in some fashion, that the grace of God is necessary for the acquisition, not, indeed, of any philosophy, but of the true philosophy. And if the true philosophy which is our only aid against the misery of this life is divinely given only to the few, it appears clearly enough from this that the human race in general has been condemned to pay the penalty of this misery. But as, according to our adversaries' acknowledgment, no greater gift has been bestowed by God, so we must believe that it is given by none other than that God Who they themselves say is greater than all the gods whom they worship.

23 Of the miseries of this life which specifically attend the labours of the good, leaving aside those which befall good and bad men alike

In addition to the evils which in this life are common to good and bad men alike, the righteous suffer hardships peculiar to themselves, insofar as they strive against their vices and so encounter the temptations and perils of such a struggle. Sometimes it does so more tumultuously and sometimes more mildly; but 'the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh' unceasingly, so that we cannot do the things that we would, and rid ourselves entirely of evil desires.⁶⁸ Rather, we can only subdue such desires

⁶⁷ Cf. *Acad. post.*, 1,2,7.

⁶⁸ Gal. 5, 17.

by withholding our consent from them as far as we can, with God's help. Let us watch with unceasing vigilance lest a semblance of truth mislead us; lest cunning speech deceive us; lest some error plunge us into darkness; lest we believe good to be evil or evil good; lest fear hold us back from doing what we should, or desire precipitate us into doing what we should not; lest the sun go down on our wrath;⁶⁹ lest hatred provoke us into returning evil for evil;⁷⁰ lest unworthy and immoderate grief absorb us; lest an ungrateful mind make us reluctant to confer benefits; lest evil rumours wear out our good conscience; lest rash suspicion on our part deceive us, or the false accusations of others dishearten us; lest sin reign in our mortal bodies so that we 'obey it in the lusts thereof'; lest we yield our members 'as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin';⁷¹ lest the eye follow lust; lest the desire for revenge overcome us; lest sight or thought linger over some evil thing which delights us; lest we find pleasure in hearing wicked or indecent talk; lest we do what is pleasant but unlawful; and lest in this struggle, filled as it is with hardship and peril, we either hope to win victory by our own strength, or attribute it when won to our own strength, and not to the grace of Him of Whom the apostle says, 'Thanks be unto God, Who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'⁷² In another place he says, 'In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.'⁷³

Let us, however, know this: that no matter how strenuously we repel our vices, and no matter how successful we are in overcoming and subduing them, for as long as we remain in this body we can never be without reason for saying to God, 'Forgive us our trespasses.'⁷⁴ In that kingdom where we are to dwell forever with immortal bodies, there will no longer be either conflicts or trespasses: indeed, there would never have been any, at any time or in any condition, had our nature remained righteous, as it was created. As it is, however, our present conflict, in which we are exposed to such great peril and from which we hope to be delivered by final

⁶⁹ Cf. Eph. 4,26.

⁷⁰ Cf. Rom. 12,17.

⁷¹ Rom. 6,12f.

⁷² 1 Cor. 15,57.

⁷³ Rom. 8,37.

⁷⁴ Matt. 6,12.

victory, belongs to the ills of this life: a life which is shown, by the evidence of the many and grave evils which it contains, to be a life under condemnation.

24 Of the blessings with which the Creator has filled this life, even though it is subject to condemnation

The human race's present condition of misery is a punishment for which we can only praise God's justice; yet in His goodness He has filled the whole of His creation with many good things of all kinds, which we must now consider.

The first blessing is that which he pronounced before Adam sinned, saying, 'Increase, and multiply, and replenish the earth.'⁷⁵ He did not choose to diminish that blessing after Adam sinned. Rather, the fruitfulness which He had given remained even in the condemned stock. The blemish of sin, though it has brought down upon us the necessity of death, has not taken away from us that wondrous power of seed, or, rather, that even more wondrous power by which seed is produced: a power which is, in a manner of speaking, inscribed or woven into the human body. And in this river or torrent of the human race, as it were, both elements run side by side: the evil derived from our first parent, and the good which we owe to Him Who created us. The original evil consists of two things, sin and punishment; and the original good consists of two other things, propagation and conformation.⁷⁶ But we have now said enough for our present purposes of the two evils: of sin, which comes from our own audacity, and of the judgment, that is, the punishment, of God. I come next, then, to the blessings which God has conferred upon us, and continues to confer even in our vitiated and condemned state. For even in condemning us, God did not take away all that He had given. Otherwise, mankind would have simply ceased to exist.⁷⁷ Nor did God remove man from His power, even when He inflicted upon him the penalty of subjection to the devil; for He has not excluded even the devil from the scope of His authority. Even the devil's nature subsists only because He Who

⁷⁵ Gen. 1,28.

⁷⁶ By *conformatio* here, Augustine seems to mean the ability of a species not only to reproduce, but to reproduce replicas of itself.

⁷⁷ Cf. Augustine, *De gen. ad lit.*, 4,12.

supremely exists causes it to do so; for whatever exists at all owes the fact that it exists to God.

As we have said, then, these goods flow out from the goodness of God, as from a kind of fountain, even into a nature vitiated by sin and condemned to punishment. The first of them, propagation, God bestowed by His blessing during those first creative works from which He rested on the seventh day; while the second, conformation, He still gives in his continued activity up to the present time. Indeed, if God were to remove the efficacy of His power from things, they would not be able to go on and attain the kind of development assigned to them, or live out their allotted span; nor, indeed, would they even remain in that condition in which they were created.

God, therefore, created man in such a way that He added to him a kind of fertility by which he might propagate other men, producing in them at the same time the possibility, though not the necessity, of propagating themselves. God takes away this capacity from certain persons, as He wills, making them barren; but from the human race considered generally He has not taken away the gift of propagation once conferred upon the first pair by His blessing. This power of propagation, then, was not taken away by man's sin; but it is not what it would have been had man not sinned. For 'Man, placed in honour, fell, and is become like the beasts',⁷⁸ and now he breeds like the beasts. Yet there is still in him a certain spark of that reason in respect of which he was made in the image of God; and this has not been wholly quenched.

But if conformation were not added to propagation, mankind would not continue to exhibit its own distinctive forms and modes of being. Furthermore, even if there had been no sexual intercourse between human beings, and God had nonetheless wished to fill the world with mankind, He could have created all men, just as He created the first one, without the coming together of husband and wife; whereas sexual intercourse certainly could not produce offspring without God's creative power. And so we may adapt to this bodily propagation what the apostle says of that spiritual formation by which a man is fashioned in piety and righteousness. He says, 'Neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but

⁷⁸ Psalm 49, 12; 20.

God that giveth the increase.⁷⁹ In the same way, we can say that neither is the sexual intercourse nor he that soweth anything, but God that giveth form; neither is the mother, who conceives, carries, bears and feeds, anything, but God that giveth growth.

For it is thanks to the activity of God continued even down to the present time that seeds display themselves and evolve from hidden and invisible folds, as it were, into the visible forms of beauty which we behold. It is He Who brings about that wondrous combination and union of an incorporeal with a corporeal nature, with the former in command and the latter subject to it, by which a living being is made. This is a work so great and marvellous as to astonish the mind that considers it well, and to call forth praise to the Creator. And this is true not only in the case of man, who is a rational being and therefore more excellent and outstanding than any other creature on earth, but even in the case of the minutest fly.

It is God Who has given the human soul a mind. In the infant, reason and intelligence are in a certain sense dormant, and it is as if they were not present at all. But they are soon to be awakened and exercised as the years pass; and in this way the individual becomes capable of knowledge and learning, able to perceive the truth and love the good. This capacity enables the mind to drink in wisdom and to achieve those virtues of prudence, fortitude, temperance and justice by which a man is equipped to resist errors and the other vices implanted in him, and to conquer them by fixing his desires upon nothing but the Supreme and Immutable Good. A man may, indeed, not succeed in doing this; but who can adequately describe or imagine the glory of this work of the Almighty, and the marvellous benefit which He has divinely implanted in our rational nature in giving us even the capacity for such good?

But not only do we have this capacity to live well and to achieve immortal happiness by means of those arts which are called virtues, which are given only by the grace of God, which is in Christ, to the children of the promise and of the kingdom. In addition, there are the many great arts invented and exercised by human ingenuity, some for necessary purposes and other for pleasure. The mind and reason of man shows great excellence in contriving such things,

⁷⁹ 1 Cor. 3,7.

even though they may be superfluous, or even perilous and hurtful; and is not this excellence evidence of a great good which man has in his nature, whereby he is able to discover, learn and exercise those arts? How wonderful, how astonishing, are the achievements of human industry in devising clothing and shelter! What progress man has made in agriculture and navigation! With what variety are his achievements in pottery, painting and sculpture conceived and executed! What wonderful spectacles are displayed in the theatres, where things are done and shown which are incredible to those who see and hear them! What ingenious methods do we find employed in capturing, killing or taming wild beasts! How many kinds of poisons, weapons and contrivances have been devised for use against men? How many medicines and remedies do we find used to preserve or restore health? What of the great variety of seasonings which have been devised to whet the appetite and please the palate? What of the many and various means of communication and persuasion, among which speech and writing hold the chief place? What of the delight which the mind finds in the ornaments of oratory and in the abundant diversity of poetry? Or that which the ears find in musical instruments and the various kinds of melody which have been devised? What of man's skill in measurement and number or his cleverness in studying the motions and order of the stars? How fully has he come to understand so many of the things of this world! Who can describe his knowledge, especially if one should wish to dwell upon particular aspects of it, instead of heaping it all together at once? Finally, who can sufficiently measure the great ingenuity displayed by philosophers and heretics in defending even errors and false doctrines? And here we are speaking only of the natural capacities with which the human mind is adorned in this mortal life, not of the faith and the way of truth by which man achieves life immortal.

Since the Creator of this wondrous nature is none other than the true and supreme God, and since He governs all that He has made, wielding supreme power and supreme justice over it, then, clearly, that nature would never have fallen into its present miserable state, and would not be doomed to pass beyond its present miseries into eternal ones (although a few will be saved), had it not been for the very great sin of the first man, from whom the rest of us have sprung.

Moreover, how clearly does the providence of our great Creator appear even in the body itself! This is so even though it has mortality in common with the beasts, and is in many respects weaker than they. For are not the sense organs and the other parts of the body so arranged, and the form and shape and stature of the whole body so disposed, as to indicate that it was made as the servant of the rational soul? We see that man has not been created like the animals which lack reason, whose faces are turned towards the ground. On the contrary, his bodily form is erect, facing towards heaven, to admonish him to dwell on things above. Then there is the wonderful mobility with which his tongue and hands are equipped, so that he is able to speak and write and accomplish so many other arts and crafts. And does not all this show us clearly enough the kind of soul of which a body of this kind was intended to be an adjunct? Moreover, even leaving aside the necessary functions of the parts, there is a harmonious congruence between them all, a beauty in their mutual arrangement and correspondence, such that one does not know whether the major factor in their creation was usefulness or beauty.

Certainly, we see that no part of the body has been created for the sake of usefulness which does not also have something to contribute to its beauty. And this would appear to us all the more clearly if we knew how all its parts are connected to one another and mutually related. Perhaps, indeed, human ingenuity could discover these relations, if it were given the task of doing so, by observing what appears on the body's surface only. For as to what is covered and removed from our scrutiny – the complex arrangement of veins and nerves and entrails and hidden vital organs – no one can come at it. Certain physicians, called anatomists, who are both diligent and ruthless, have dissected the bodies of the dead, and have even cut into the bodies of the dying in order to study them. In this way, and with scant regard for humanity, they have pried into the secrets of the human body to learn the nature of the disease and its location, and how and by what means it might be cured. But as to those relations of which I speak, and which form the 'togetherness' – what the Greeks call the *harmonia* – of the whole body, outside and in, as of some instrument: has anyone yet managed to find these? No one, indeed, has yet had the boldness to search for them. If these could be known, however, then even the

internal organs of the body, which make no show of beauty, would so delight the mind, which makes use of the eyes, with their rational beauty that we should prefer that beauty more than the merely visible beauty which pleases the eye alone.

Moreover, certain things are associated with the body in such a way as to have beauty but no use. Cases in point are the nipples on a man's chest and the beard on his face. The fact that the beard exists as a manly adornment and not for purposes of protection is shown by the beardless faces of women, who are the weaker sex and for whom a beard would therefore be more suitable if it were a protective device. If it is true, therefore – and no one can doubt it – that, of all our members which are visible to us, there is not one in which beauty is sacrificed to usefulness, while there are others which have no use other than to contribute to the body's beauty, then we can, I think, readily understand from this that, when the body was created, dignity took precedence over necessity. After all, necessity is a transitory thing; whereas the time is coming when we shall enjoy each other's beauty without any lust: an enjoyment which will specially redound to the praise of the Creator, Who, as it is said in the psalm, has 'put on praise and comeliness'.⁸⁰

Next, what discourse can adequately describe the beauty and utility of the rest of creation, which the divine bounty has bestowed upon man to behold and consume, even though he has been condemned and cast forth into the labours and miseries of our present condition? Consider the manifold and varied beauty of sky and earth and sea; the plenteousness of light and its wondrous quality, in the sun, moon and stars and in the shadows of the forests; the colour and fragrance of flowers; the diversity and multitude of the birds, with their songs and bright colours; the multiform species of living creatures of all kinds, even the smallest of which we behold with the greatest wonder – for we are more astonished at the feats of tiny ants and bees than we are at the immense bodies of the whales.

Consider also the grand spectacle of the sea, robing herself in different colours, like garments: sometimes green, and that in so many different shades; sometimes purple; sometimes blue. And what a delightful thing it is to behold the sea when stormy: a sight made all the more delightful to the onlooker by the pleasant thought

⁸⁰ Psalm 104,1 (LXX).

that he is not a sailor being tossed and heaved about on it!⁸¹ Is there any limit to the abundant supply of food by which we are everywhere fortified against hunger? Or to the variety of flavours available to our fastidious tastes, lavishly distributed by the richness of nature, quite apart from the skill and labour of cooks? Consider also all the resources available to us for the preservation or recovery of health; the welcome alternation of day and night; the soothing coolness of breezes; all the material for our clothing furnished by plants and animals. Who could give a complete account of all these things?

I have here given only a condensed account of them. If I had chosen to deal with each one of them in turn – to unfold each of them, as it were, and discuss in detail what I have indicated only broadly – what a time it would take! And all these things are only the solace of the wretched and condemned, not the rewards of the blessed! What, then, will those rewards be, if the consolations are so many and so great? What will God give to those whom He has predestined to life, if He has given all these things even to those predestined to death? What good things will He bestow in that future life of happiness upon those for whom in this life of misery He willed that His only begotten son should undergo such great evils, even unto death? Hence, the apostle speaks of those predestined to that kingdom in these words: 'He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also give us all things?'⁸²

When this promise is fulfilled, what shall we be? What shall we be like? What good things shall we receive in that kingdom, since already we have received Christ's death as an earnest of them? How wonderful will the condition of man's spirit be then, when it no longer has any vice at all: when it is neither subject to any nor yields to any, and when it no longer has to strive against any, however laudably, but is perfected in unalloyed peace and virtue! How complete, how splendid, how assured will its knowledge of all things be: a knowledge acquired without any error or toil, by drinking God's wisdom at its very source, with supreme happiness and without any hindrance! How wonderful will the body's condition be, when it will be in every way subject to the spirit, by which it will

⁸¹ Cf. Lucretius, *De rerum nat.*, 2, 1ff.

⁸² Rom. 8, 23.

be made so fully alive as to need no other nourishment! For, then, it will no longer be an animal body, but a spiritual one, having the substance of flesh, indeed, but without any carnal corruption.

25 Of the obstinacy of those who still deny the resurrection of the body even though the whole world now believes in it, as was foretold

Distinguished philosophers do not disagree with us as to the good things which the soul will enjoy in that condition of perfect blessedness which is to come after this life. They do, however, deny the resurrection of the flesh, and argue against it by whatever means they can. But the many who believe – learned and unlearned alike, the world's wise men and its fools – leave the very few who do not believe to their own devices, and turn to Christ: to Christ Who, by His own resurrection, has demonstrated the truth of that which seems to unbelievers absurd. The world has come to believe what God foretold would happen; and He also foretold that the world would come to believe it. These predictions, at any rate, did not come about because God was compelled to make them, and thereby to move believers to praise Him, by the magic arts of Peter, since they were uttered so long before.⁸³ He who foretold these things (as I have said before and am not ashamed to repeat) is the God before Whom all other divinities tremble. Porphyry himself confesses as much, and desires to prove it by appealing to the oracles of those gods of his.⁸⁴ Indeed, he even praises Him to the extent of calling Him God the Father and King. God forbid, then, that we should interpret these predictions in the way that unbelievers do: in the way favoured by those who, unlike the rest of the world, do not believe what God foretold that the rest of the world would believe. For is it not better to follow the rest of the world, whose belief was foretold, rather than the tiny number of those who talk idly and refuse to believe?

Our adversaries may, however, say that they interpret these predictions differently from us only because, if they take them literally, they are nonsense, and to do so is therefore to affront the God

⁸³ Cf. Bk xviii, 53f.

⁸⁴ Cf. Bk xix, 23; xx, 24.

Whom they hold in such high esteem. But do they not affront Him far more grievously when they say that what He foretold is to be understood otherwise than as the world believes, even though He Himself praised, promised and fulfilled this belief on the world's part? In any case, why can He not cause the flesh to rise again, and live eternally? Or are we to believe that He will not do this because it is an evil thing and unworthy of God? Of His omnipotence, which causes so many unbelievable things to happen, we have already said a great deal. If our adversaries wish to know what the Almighty cannot do, here they have it; I will tell them: He cannot lie. Let us, therefore, believe what He can do by not believing what He cannot do. By not believing that He can lie, let them believe that He will do what He has promised to do; and let them believe it as the world believes it, whose belief He foretold, whose belief He praised, whose belief He promised, and whose belief He now shows us.

Moreover, how can anyone demonstrate that the resurrection is an evil thing? There will be no corruption there, which is an evil of the body; the order of the elements I have already discussed; and I have said enough also of the other conjectures of men. As for the ease of movement to be expected in an incorruptible body, and of its immortal condition, which is in no way to be compared to our present body even in a state of equable good health: these things I have, I believe, sufficiently shown in the thirteenth book.⁸⁵ Let those who have not read those earlier remarks, or who wish to recall what they have read, refer again to what I have said there.

26 That the opinion of Porphyry, that the soul, in order to be blessed, must be separated from every kind of body, is at odds with what Plato says: that the Supreme God promised the gods that they would never be excluded from their bodies

But, say our adversaries, Porphyry tells us that the soul, if it is to be blessed, must avoid contact with every kind of body. It is to no purpose, therefore, to say that the future body will be incorruptible, if the soul cannot be blessed until it has escaped from every kind of body. I have already discussed this objection sufficiently in the

⁸⁵ Cf. Bk XIII, 18.

book just mentioned. I will, however, repeat one thing here: let their master Plato amend his own writings and say that their gods, in order to be blessed, must be rid of their bodies; that is, must die. For he said that they were enclosed in celestial bodies, and that, notwithstanding this, the God by Whom they were made assured them of their own immortality: that is, He promised them that they would remain in those same bodies eternally, and that this was to come about not by nature, but only by the prevailing influence of His purpose. In the same place, Plato also overthrows the arguments of those who say that we are not to believe in the resurrection of the flesh because it is impossible. Indeed, according to Plato, when the uncreated God promised immortality to the gods created by Him, He said quite explicitly that He would do what is impossible. On Plato's account, this is what He says: 'Because you have been originated, you cannot, indeed, be immortal and indestructible. You will, however, certainly not be destroyed, nor shall any doom of death undo you and prove mightier than my purpose, which is a stronger assurance of your perpetuity than those bodies to which you were united when you were begotten.'⁸⁶ No one who hears these words, unless he were deaf as well as stupid, could have any doubt that, according to Plato, God promised the gods He had made that He would do what is impossible. For when He says, in effect, 'Although you cannot be immortal, you will become immortal by my will', what else does this mean but, 'I will make you what you cannot be'?

And so He Who, according to Plato, promised to do this impossible thing, will raise up the flesh so that it will be incorruptible, immortal and spiritual. Why do our adversaries still insist that what God has promised is impossible, when the world has believed in God's promise, and when we proclaim that the God Who will do this is the very God of Whom Plato himself declares that He can do impossible things?

What is required to ensure the soul's blessedness, then, is not an escape from any kind of body whatsoever but the acquisition of an incorruptible body. And what incorruptible body could be better adapted to the joy of those who rise again than the one in which they groaned when it was corruptible? When they are in such a

⁸⁶ Cicero, *Timaeus*, 2, translating Plato, *Tim.*, 41Af; cf. Bk XIII, 16.

body, they will not feel that dire lust which Virgil, following Plato, ascribed to them when he said that they will 'once more desire a return to bodies'.⁸⁷ When they are in such a body, I say, they will not desire to return to their mortal body, precisely because they will then possess that body to which they might have wished to return; but they will possess it in such a way as never to lose it again, nor to be parted from it for even the briefest moment by any death.

27 Of the contradictions which seem to be present in the opinions of Plato and Porphyry: opinions which would have led them both to the truth if they had been able to yield to one another

If Plato and Porphyry had been able to communicate to one another certain statements which each of them made singly, they might well have become Christians. Plato said that souls cannot exist eternally without bodies. It is for this reason, he said, that the souls even of the wise must return to bodies, even if only after a considerable time. But Porphyry said that the purified soul, when it has returned to the Father, will never again return to the ills of this world. Thus, if Plato had imparted to Porphyry the truth which he saw – that even the purest souls of the wise and righteous must return to human bodies; and if Porphyry had imparted to Plato the truth which he saw – that holy souls are never to return again to the miseries of a corruptible body: then, instead of each holding only one of these truths, they would both have held both of them together.⁸⁸ In that case, they would, I think, have seen that it follows that souls return to bodies, and also that they will receive bodies of such a kind that they will live blessed and immortal lives in them. For even holy souls, according to Plato, will return to human bodies, whereas, according to Porphyry, holy souls will not return to the ills of this world. Let Porphyry, then, say with Plato, 'They will return to bodies'; and let Plato say with Porphyry, 'They will not return to their former misery.' Then, they will agree that souls return to bodies, but to bodies in which they will suffer no evils. Such bodies can be none other than those which God promises

⁸⁷ Virgil, *Aen.*, 6,751, cf. Plato., *Phaedrus*, 249A; *Rep.*, 619D; Bk XIV,5.

⁸⁸ Cf. Bk XIII,16; Ch. 12 above.

when He says that blessed souls will live for ever with their own flesh. Having admitted that the souls of the saints will return to immortal bodies, both Plato and Porphyry would, as I judge the matter, now readily concede this much to us: would, that is, allow them to return to their own bodies – the bodies in which they endured the ills of this world, and in which they worshipped God in piety and faith so that they might be delivered from those ills.

**28 What Plato, Labeo, or even Varro might have
contributed to the true faith of the resurrection, if
they had combined one another's opinions into a
single statement**

There are not a few Christians who have a liking for Plato because of his outstanding eloquence and because his perceptions are so often true ones; and these say that his opinion concerning the resurrection of the dead is somewhat like our own. Cicero, however, touching upon this in his book *De republica*, asserts that Plato was speaking in fun, and did not intend what he said to be taken as a statement of the truth.⁸⁹ For Cicero introduces a man who had come back to life, and who gave an account of his experiences which corroborated the arguments of Plato.⁹⁰ Again, Labeo tells of two men who died, and who met one another at a certain crossroads. Then, commanded to return to their bodies, they agreed to be friends for as long as they lived, and remained so until they died once more. But the bodily resurrection of which these authors tell is like that of those persons whom we ourselves have known to rise again: who indeed returned to this life, but not in such a way as never to die again. Marcus Varro, however, records something rather more remarkable in his book called *De gente populi Romani*, which I think it best to give his own words. 'Certain casters of horoscopes have written that men are to undergo rebirth, which the Greeks call *palingenesia*, and that, according to them, this takes place after 440 years. Then, the same soul and the same body which were formerly united in one person will be united again in the same person.'

⁸⁹ *De rep.*, 6,3f.

⁹⁰ *Rep.*, 614Bff.

Now what is said here by Varro, or by I know not what 'casters of horoscopes' (for he records their opinion without producing their names), is, of course, false; for when souls have returned to the bodies they once wore, they will never leave them again. He does, however, say something which undermines and destroys much of that idle talk of those who declare that the resurrection is an impossibility. For those who have held, or who still hold, the view recorded by Varro cannot think it impossible that bodies should return to their former state even if they have disintegrated into the air, or into dust or ashes, or dissolved into liquid, or been absorbed into the bodies of animals or even men who have devoured them.

Therefore Plato and Porphyry – or, rather, those of their admirers who are now alive – agree with us that even holy souls will return to bodies (as Plato says), but that they will not return to any evils (as Porphyry says). Now it follows from these premisses that the soul will receive the kind of body in which it can live for ever in felicity, without any evil; which is what the Christian faith preaches. Let them now also adopt the teaching of Varro, that the soul returns to the same body as it was formerly in, and the whole question of the eternal resurrection of the flesh will then be resolved for them.

29 Of the kind of vision with which the saints will see God in the world to come

Next, let us consider, with such aid as God may deign to grant us, how the saints are to be occupied when they are clothed in immortal and spiritual bodies, and when the flesh shall live no longer in a carnal but in a spiritual fashion. And yet, to tell the truth, I do not know what the nature of that occupation, or rather of that rest and repose, will be. After all, I have never seen it with my bodily sight; and if I should say that I had seen it with my mind – that is, with my intellect – how great, after all, is our intellect, and how can it comprehend so excellent a condition? For then there will be, as the apostle says, 'the peace of God which passeth all understanding',⁹¹ and does not this mean that it will pass all human, and perhaps all angelic, understanding, though not, of course, the understanding of

⁹¹ Phil. 4.7.

God? If, therefore, the saints are to live in the peace of God, they are to live in that peace which passeth all understanding. That it passeth ours there is no doubt; but if it passeth that of the angels – and he who says ‘all understanding’ seems not to exempt them – then we must understand that, according to this saying, the peace of God is such that neither we nor the angels can know, as God knows, that peace which God Himself enjoys. There is no doubt, then, that this peace ‘passeth all understanding’ apart from His own.

But because, in our measure, we are made partakers of His peace, we know the perfection of peace in ourselves, among ourselves, and with God, insofar as it is in us to achieve such perfection. So too, the angels know it, according to their measure; but men in their present state know it in a far lower degree, no matter how outstanding they may be in mental capacity. For let us remember how great a man it was who said, ‘We know in part, and we prophesy in part, until that which is perfect is come’; and ‘Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face.’⁹² This is how the holy angels see already. They are also called our angels; for we have been redeemed from the power of darkness: we have received the earnest of the Spirit, and are translated into the kingdom of Christ, and so we already begin to belong to those angels with whom we shall dwell in fellowship in that holy and most delightful City of God, of which we have now written so many books. In this way, therefore, the angels of God are also our angels, as Christ is God’s and Christ is also ours. They are God’s, because they have not forsaken Him; they are ours, because they have begun to have us as their fellow citizens. The Lord Jesus also said, ‘See that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always see the face of my Father which is in heaven.’⁹³ As they see, therefore, so shall we also see; but we do not yet see in this way, and it is for this reason that the apostle uses the words quoted a moment ago: ‘Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face.’ This vision is reserved as the reward of our faith; and of it the apostle John also speaks, saying: ‘When He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.’⁹⁴ By ‘the face’ of

⁹² 1 Cor. 13,ff.

⁹³ Matt. 18,10.

⁹⁴ 1 John 3,2.

God we are to understand His manifestation, and not some part of the body such as we have and which we call by that name.

Thus, if I am asked what the activity of the saints in that spiritual body will be, I cannot say that I see now. I can say only that I believe, according to that which I read in the psalm: 'I believed, therefore I have spoken.'⁹⁵ And so I say that the saints will see God in the body; but whether they will see Him by means of the body's eyes, as we now see the sun, moon, stars, sea and earth and all the things on the earth: that is no small question. On the one hand, it is hard to say that the saints will have bodies of such a kind that they will not be able to close and open their eyes at will; but, on the other hand, it is still harder to say that someone will then not be able to see God simply because he closes his eyes.

For the prophet Elisha, though absent in body, saw his servant Gehazi accepting the reward given by Naaman the Syrian, whom the prophet had healed from the deformity of leprosy, while the servant supposed that his iniquity was hidden from his master because he was not there to see it.⁹⁶ How much more, then, in that spiritual body, will the saints see all things, not only when they close their eyes, but even when they are absent in body! For then will be that time of perfection of which the apostle speaks, saying: 'We know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.' Then, in order to show as fully as possible, by simile, how different the life to come will be from that now lived not only by ordinary men, but also by those gifted with outstanding sanctity, he says: 'When I was a child, I understood as a child, I spake as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.'⁹⁷

Even in this life, therefore, where the prophetic gift of men with miraculous powers stands as childhood does to adulthood in comparison with the life to come, Elisha, even though not with his servant, saw him accepting gifts. Shall we say, then, that 'when that which is perfect is come', and the corruptible body no longer

⁹⁵ Psalm 116, 10.

⁹⁶ 2 Kings 5, 20ff.

⁹⁷ 1 Cor. 13, 9f.

'presseth down the soul',⁹⁸ but is incorruptible and does not impede it, the saints will need bodily eyes to see, though Elisha had no need of them to see his servant when he was absent from him? For, according to the Septuagint translation, these are the prophet's words to Gehazi: 'Did not my heart go with thee, when the man came out of his chariot to meet thee, and thou tookedst his gifts?' – and so on; or, in the translation from the Hebrew made by the presbyter Jerome, 'Was not my heart present when the man turned from his chariot to meet thee?'⁹⁹ As he himself said, therefore, it was in his heart that the prophet saw what had happened; and there is no doubt that he did this with the miraculous assistance of divine power. How much more fully, then, will all abound in that gift when God shall be all in all!¹⁰⁰ The bodily eyes, however, will also have their function and place, and will be used by the spirit through the spiritual body. For, while the prophet did not need those bodily eyes to see his absent servant, he nonetheless made use of them to see things close at hand, even though he could have seen them by the spirit if he had closed his eyes, just as he had seen absent things when he was nowhere near them. God forbid, therefore, that we should say that the saints in the life to come will not see God when they close their eyes; for they will always see Him in the Spirit.

But the question is, whether they will also see by means of the bodily eyes when they have them open. For if the eyes of the spiritual body, though spiritual, can do no more than the eyes which we now have, then it is beyond doubt that God cannot be seen with them. They must, then, be of a very different power if they can look upon that incorporeal nature which is not contained in any place, but which is entirely everywhere. For although we say that God is in heaven and on earth – as he Himself says, through his prophet: 'I fill heaven and earth'¹⁰¹ – this is not to say that part of Him is in heaven and part on earth. Rather, He is wholly in heaven and wholly on earth, and not at different times, but simultaneously; and this cannot be true of any corporeal nature. In the world to come, then, the power of our eyes will greatly surpass what it is now. It will not do so merely in respect of the keenness of sight

⁹⁸ Wisd. 9.10.

⁹⁹ 2 Kings 5.26.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. 1 Cor. 15.28.

¹⁰¹ Jer. 23.24.

which serpents or eagles are said to have; for these creatures, no matter how keenly they see, can discern nothing but corporeal substances. Rather, our eyes will then have the power of seeing incorporeal things. Perhaps it was this great power of sight which was given for a time to that holy man Job, even while he was still in this mortal body, when he said to God: 'I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and melt away, and count myself dust and ashes',¹⁰² although there is nothing to prevent us from understanding this to refer to the eye of the heart, of which the apostle says, 'Having the eyes of your heart illuminated'.¹⁰³

But no Christian doubts that it is with those eyes of the heart that he will see God; for he faithfully accepts what our God and Master says: 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.'¹⁰⁴ The question, however, is, Will God be seen also with the eyes of the body in the world to come? For it is written that 'all flesh shall see the salvation of God';¹⁰⁵ but this may without difficulty be understood as if it were said, 'And every man shall see the Christ of God', Who certainly was seen in the body, and will be seen in the body when He comes to judge the living and the dead. For many other passages of Scripture attest that Christ is the salvation of God; and especially clear are the words of the venerable old man Simeon, who, when he had taken the infant Christ into his arms, said, 'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.'¹⁰⁶ We also have the words of Job, already mentioned, as they are found in the Hebrew text, 'And in my flesh shall I see God.'¹⁰⁷ No doubt these words were a prophecy of the resurrection of the flesh. If he had said 'by my flesh' rather than 'in my flesh', we should at once have understood him to mean, 'I shall see Christ, my God, who will be seen in the flesh and by the flesh.' As it is, we may still take him to mean, 'I shall be in the flesh when I shall see God.'

Again, when the apostle says 'face to face', this does not compel us to believe that we shall see God by means of this corporeal face,

¹⁰² Job 42,5f.

¹⁰³ Eph. 1,18.

¹⁰⁴ Matt. 5,8.

¹⁰⁵ Luke 3,6.

¹⁰⁶ Luke 2,29f.

¹⁰⁷ Job 19,26.

where the body's eyes are; for we shall see Him by the spirit, without interruption. For if the apostle had not here intended us to understand the 'face' of the inner man, he would not have said, 'But we, with unveiled face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.'¹⁰⁸ Nor do we have a different understanding of what the psalmist sings, 'Draw near unto him, and be enlightened; and your faces shall not be ashamed.'¹⁰⁹ For it is by faith that we draw near to God, and faith is an act of the spirit, not of the body. But we do not know what new qualities the spiritual body will have, for here we speak of a matter of which we have no experience. Thus, confronted with certain things which we cannot understand and on which Divine Scripture offers no help, our condition is necessarily that of which we read in the Book of Wisdom: 'The thoughts of mortal men are timid, and our forecastings uncertain.'¹¹⁰

Now the reasoning of the philosophers asserts that intelligible things are perceived by the vision of the mind and sensible things – that is, corporeal things – by the body's senses, whereas the mind cannot observe intelligible things by means of the body, nor corporeal things simply by its own activity. If we could establish this reasoning as entirely certain, then it would clearly follow that God could not be seen by the eye even of a spiritual body. But this reasoning is shown to be ridiculous both by true reason and by prophetic authority. For who is so turned aside from the truth as to dare to say that God has no knowledge of corporeal objects? Has He therefore a body, the eyes of which make it possible for Him to acquire such knowledge? Moreover, does not what we have just said concerning the prophet Elisha indicate clearly enough that corporeal things can be discerned by the spirit without the body? For when Elisha's servant received the gifts, this was undoubtedly a bodily act; yet the prophet saw it not by means of the body, but by the spirit. It is clear, therefore, that corporeal things are perceived by the spirit; why, then, should there not by the same token be a power in a spiritual body great enough to enable even spirit to be perceived

¹⁰⁸ 2 Cor. 3,18.

¹⁰⁹ Psalm 34,6.

¹¹⁰ Wisd. 9,14.

by such a body? For 'God is a Spirit.'¹¹ Moreover, each man is aware of his own life: the life which he now lives in the body and which causes his earthly members to grow and be alive; but he is aware of it, not by means of the body's eyes, but through an interior sense. The life of others, however, though it is invisible, he sees with the bodily eye. For how do we distinguish between living bodies and non-living objects, except by seeing simultaneously both the body and the life, which we cannot see other than with the bodily eye? But a life without a body we cannot see with the bodily eye.

It may well be, then – indeed, this is entirely credible – that, in the world to come, we shall see the bodily forms of the new heaven and the new earth in such a way as to perceive God with total clarity and distinctness, everywhere present and governing all things, both material and spiritual. In this life, we understand the invisible things of God by the things which are made, and we see Him darkly and in part, as in a glass, and by faith rather than by perceiving corporeal appearances with our bodily eyes. In the life to come, however, it may be that we shall see Him by means of the bodies which we shall then wear, and wherever we shall turn our eyes. In this life, after all, as soon as we become aware of the men among whom we live, we do not merely believe that they are alive and displaying vital motions: we see it, beyond any doubt, by means of our bodies, though we are not able to see their life without their bodies. By the same token, in the world to come, wherever we shall look with the spiritual eyes of our bodies, we shall then, by means of our bodies, behold the incorporeal God ruling all things.

It may be, therefore, that God will be seen in this way because the eyes will then have some excellence similar to that of the mind, by which they will be able to discern incorporeal natures. It is difficult, however, or even impossible, to find any support in Scripture for this suggestion. Alternatively – and this is easier to accept – God will then be known to us and visible to us in such a way that we shall see Him by the spirit in ourselves, in one another, in Himself, in the new heavens and the new earth, and in every created thing which shall then exist; and also by the body we shall see Him in every body to which the keen vision of the eye of the spiritual

¹¹ John 4.24.

body shall extend. The thoughts of each of us will then also be made manifest to all; for then shall be fulfilled the words of the apostle, who said: 'Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, Who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the thoughts of the heart, and then shall every one have praise of God.'¹¹²

30 Of the eternal felicity of the City of God, and of the perpetual Sabbath

How great that felicity will be, where there will be no evil, where no good thing will be lacking, and where we shall be free to give ourselves up to the praise of God, Who will be all in all! For I do not know how else we might occupy ourselves, in a condition where we will neither cease from work through idleness nor be driven to it by need. Also, I am taught by the holy canticle, in which I read or hear: 'Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord; they will be still praising Thee.'¹¹³

When the body is made incorruptible, all the members and inward parts which we now see assigned to their various necessary offices will join together in praising God; for there will then be no necessity, but only full, certain, secure and everlasting felicity. For all those elements of the body's harmony of which I have already spoken, those harmonies which are now hidden, will then be hidden no longer. Distributed through the whole body, within and without, and combined with the other great and wondrous things that will then be revealed, the delight which their rational beauty gives us will kindle our rational minds to the praise of so great an Artist.

I do not venture to give any bold account of what the movements of such bodies will be in the world to come; indeed, I cannot even imagine it. But everything there will be seemly in its form, in motion and in rest, for anything that is not seemly will not be there. It is certain also that the body will go immediately to wherever the spirit wills; and the spirit will never will anything which is not seemly either to the spirit or to the body. True glory will be there, for no one will be praised in error or flattery. True honour, also,

¹¹² 1 Cor. 4,5.

¹¹³ Psalm 84,5.

will there be denied to no one who is worthy of it, nor given to anyone unworthy; neither shall anyone who is unworthy even ask it, for none but the worthy will be permitted to be there. True peace will be there, for no one will suffer enmity either within himself or from anyone else.

The reward of virtue will be God Himself, Who gives virtue, and Who has promised Himself to us, than Whom nothing is better or greater. When He said through the prophet, 'I will be your God, and ye shall be my people',¹¹⁴ what else was meant than, I will be their sufficiency; I will be all that men honourably desire: life, and health, and nourishment, and plenty, and glory, and honour, and peace, and all good things? This, too, is the correct understanding of what the apostle says, 'That God may be all in all.'¹¹⁵ God will be the end of our desires. He will be seen without end, loved without stint, praised without weariness. And this duty, this affection, this employment, will, like eternal life itself, be common to all.

What degrees of honour and glory will there be then, proportioned to the various degrees of merit? Who can speak of them, or even imagine them? It is not to be doubted, however, that there will be such degrees. But in this respect also that blessed City will see a great good in itself; for no inferior will envy his superior, any more than the other angels envy the archangels. No one will wish to have what he has not received, and he will be bound in a bond of uttermost peace to one who has received it; just as, in the body, the finger does not wish to be the eye, since both members are contained within the ordered composition of the whole body. Thus, some will have greater gifts than others; but each will have the gift of not wanting more than he has.

Also, they will then no longer be able to take delight in sin. This does not mean, however, that they will have no free will. On the contrary, it will be all the more free, because set free from delight in sinning to take a constant delight in not sinning. For when man was created righteous, the first freedom of will that he was given consisted in an ability not to sin, but also in an ability to sin. But this last freedom of will will be greater, in that it will consist in not being able to sin. This, however, will not be a natural possibility,

¹¹⁴ Levit. 26,12.

¹¹⁵ 1 Cor. 15,28.

but a gift of God. For it is one thing to be God, and another to be a partaker of God: God is by nature unable to sin; but he who partakes of God's nature receives the impossibility of sinning only as a gift from God. Moreover, in the divine gift of free will there was to be observed a gradation such that man should first receive a free will by which he was able not to sin, and finally a free will by which he was not able to sin: the former being given to man in a state of probation, and the latter to him in a state of reward. But because human nature sinned when it had the power to sin, it is redeemed by a more abundant gift of grace so that it may be led to that state of freedom in which it cannot sin.

For the first immortality, which Adam lost by sinning, consisted in his being able not to die; but the last will consist in his being not able to die. So too, the first free will consisted in his being able not to sin, and the last will consist in his being not able to sin. Thus, man will then be just as unable to lose the will to godliness and justice as he now is to lose the will to happiness. Thanks to sin, we were unable to hold on to either godliness or happiness; but when we lost happiness, we did not lose the will to happiness. Certainly, God Himself cannot sin; but are we therefore to deny that God has free will?

In the Heavenly City, then, there will be freedom of will: one freedom for all, and indivisible in each. That city will be redeemed from all evil and filled with every good thing; constant in its enjoyment of the happiness of eternal rejoicing; forgetting offences and forgetting punishments. Yet it will not forget its own redemption, nor will it be ungrateful to its Redeemer. As a matter of rational knowledge, therefore, it will remember even its past evils, even while entirely forgetting the sensory experience of them: just as the most distinguished physician understands almost all the diseases known to his art, but is ignorant of most of them in his own body, having never suffered from them.

Knowledge of evil, therefore, is of two kinds. On the one hand, it is accessible to the power of the mind; on the other, it arises from sensory experience. Again, all vices are known in one way through the teaching of the wise, and in another way in the evil life of the foolish. So also, there are two ways of forgetting evil; for the man who has knowledge and understanding of it forgets it in one way, whereas one who has suffered it in his own experience does so in

another: the former by disregarding what he knows, and the latter by escaping what he has suffered. According to the second kind of forgetfulness, the saints will have no memory of past evils. They will be set free from them all, and they will be completely deleted from their feelings. Yet the power of knowledge will be so great in the saints that they will be aware not only of their own past suffering, but also of the everlasting misery of the damned. For if they were not to know that they had been miserable, how could they, as the psalm says, for ever sing the mercies of God?¹¹⁶ Nothing will give more joy to that City than this song of the glory of the grace of Christ, by Whose blood we are redeemed. Then shall these words be fulfilled: 'Be still, and know that I am God';¹¹⁷ then shall be that great Sabbath which has no evening, which God celebrated among His first works, as it is written: 'And God rested on the seventh day from all His works which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it He had rested from all His work which God began to make.'¹¹⁸

We ourselves shall become that seventh day, when we have been filled up and made new by His blessing and sanctification. Then shall we be still, and know that He is God: that He is what we ourselves desired to be when we fell away from Him and listened to the words of the tempter, 'Ye shall be as gods',¹¹⁹ and so forsook God, Who would have made us as gods, not by forsaking Him, but by participating in Him. For what have we done without Him, other than perish in His wrath? But when we are restored by Him and perfected by His greater grace, we shall be still for all eternity, and know that He is God, being filled by Him when He shall be all in all.

For it is only when we have understood that all our good works are His, and not our own, that those works are credited to us for the attainment of that Sabbath rest. If we ascribe them to ourselves they will be 'servile work', and it is said of the Sabbath, 'Ye shall do no servile work in it.'¹²⁰ Thus also, it is said by the prophet Ezekiel, 'And I gave them my Sabbaths to be a sign between me

¹¹⁶ Psalm 89, 2.

¹¹⁷ Psalm 46, 11

¹¹⁸ Gen. 2, 2f.

¹¹⁹ Gen. 3, 5.

¹²⁰ Deut. 5, 14

and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them.¹²¹ We shall know this perfectly when we shall be perfectly at rest, and shall know perfectly that He is God.

The nature of this Sabbath will appear to us more clearly if we count the ages as 'days' according to the periods of time which we see expressed in Scripture; for that Sabbath will then be found to be the seventh of those ages. The first 'day' is the first age, extending from Adam to the Flood; the second extends from the Flood to Abraham. The second is equal to the first not in length of time, but in the number of the generations; for there are ten generations in each. From Abraham down to the coming of Christ there are, as the evangelist Matthew reckons it, three ages, in each of which are listed fourteen generations: one age extending from Abraham to David, the second from David to the exile in Babylon, and the third from the exile to the nativity of Christ in the flesh. Thus, there are five ages in all. The sixth age is now in being; but this cannot be measured by any number of generations, for it has been said, 'It is not for you to know the times, which the Father hath put in His own power.'¹²² After this age, God will rest, as on the seventh day; and He will give us, who will be that seventh day, rest in Himself.

It would, however, take too long diligently to discuss each of these ages here. Suffice it to say that the seventh day will be our Sabbath, whose end will not be an evening, but the Lord's Day, as an eighth and eternal day, consecrated by the resurrection of Christ, and prefiguring the eternal rest not only of the Spirit, but of the body also. There we shall rest and see, see and love, love and praise. Behold what will be, in the end to which there shall be no end! For what other end do we set for ourselves than to reach that kingdom of which there is no end?

It seems to me, then, that, with the Lord's help, I have now paid my debt in bringing this huge work to a close. May those who think it too small or too large forgive me; let those who think it enough not thank me, but join with me in giving thanks to God. Amen. Amen.

¹²¹ Ezek. 20, 12.

¹²² Acts 1, 7.

Biographical notes

This glossary is as comprehensive as it could conveniently be made. I have assumed that no one who reads this work is likely to need biographical notes on biblical figures, who have therefore been omitted for reasons of space. With this exception, however, all other personal names mentioned in the text of the *City of God* are here included.

Acca: see Faustulus.

Achilles: Greek hero, son of Peleus, king of Thessaly, and the nereid Thetis. One of the heroes of the *Iliad*, where he quarrels with Agamemnon and slays Hector, son of Priam.

Adeona and Abeona: Roman goddesses, apparently presiding over the infant's first attempts to walk, but unknown apart from Augustine's references to them at IV,21 and VII,3.

Admetus: a king of Thessaly, husband of Alcestis. Apollo was condemned by Zeus to be Admetus's shepherd for a year, as a punishment for making war on the Cyclopes.

Adonis: a beautiful youth born of the incestuous love of Myrrha for her father Theias, king of Syria. According to the legend as told by Ovid (*Met.*, 10,345ff), he was killed by a boar while hunting. Roses or anemones sprang from his blood. He is a vegetation god, whose rites included the mourning of women followed by rejoicing at his rebirth.

Adrastus of Cyzicus: Adrastus of Cyzicus and Dion of Naples are mathematicians apparently mentioned in Varro's *De gente populi Romani* but of whom nothing is known.

Aegialeus: son of Inachus and Melia; founder of the town of Aegialeia and first king of the Sicyonians.

Aemulius or (more usually) Amulius: the fifteenth king of Alba Longa, descendant of Aeneas's son Ascanius; brother of Numitor and uncle of Romulus and Remus.

Aeneas: legendary ancestor of the Romans; son of Anchises and the goddess Aphrodite/Venus. He is a famous Trojan leader in Homer's *Iliad*. His escape from the ruins of Troy to Italy with his family and ancestral gods is the theme of Virgil's *Aeneid*. The epithet *pius Aeneas* mentioned at *City of God*, 1,3 is habitually applied to him by Virgil.

Aeolus: ruler of the winds; a mortal in Homer (*Od.*, 10,2ff) but a god in Virgil (*Aen.*, 1,51ff). He can tie up the winds in a bag (Homer) or imprison them in a cave (Virgil) to prevent their blowing.

Aeschines: Athenian orator and statesman (ca. 397–322 BC); an advocate of peace with Philip of Macedon, and therefore the political enemy of Demosthenes, who called him a third-rate actor (*De corona*, 209; 262; cf. Aulus Gellius, *Noct. Att.*, 11,9).

Aesculanus and Argentinus: Roman gods of bronze and silver coinage respectively; unknown apart from Augustine's reference to them at IV,21.

Aesculapius: the Latin name of Asclepios or Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine, introduced to Rome in 293 BC in the hope of escaping or eradicating a pestilence (Livy, 10,47).

Aether: the upper region of space; heaven: not infrequently personified as a god (cf. Cicero, *De nat. deor.*, 3,44; Lucretius, *De rerum nat.*, 1,250; Virgil, *Georg.*, 2,325). Identified by Arnobius (*Adv. gent.*, 3,31) and Eusebius (*Praep. evang.*, 3,11,22) with Minerva. Cf. *City of God*, VII,16.

Africanus: see Scipio.

Agamemnon: king of Mycenae; son of Atreus and Aerope; brother of Menelaus and commander-in-chief of the Greek army at the siege of Troy; father of Orestes, Iphigenia and Electra. He was eventually murdered by his wife Clytaemnestra and her lover Aegisthus.

Agenoria: nothing is known of the goddess of this name whom Augustine mentions at IV,11 and 16. He derives her name from *agere*, thus making her a goddess of action. This derivation, if correct, rules out on etymological grounds the palaeographically reasonable conjecture that she is the same as the Angerona mentioned by Pliny at *Nat. Hist.*, 3,5,65.

Alcibiades: Athenian statesman and general (450–404BC); protégé of Pericles and pupil of Socrates. He became leader of the democratic party in Athens after the death of Pericles in 429. After a career marked by reversals of fortune and uncertain loyalties, he was assassinated in 404. See especially Plato, *Symp.*, 215A–222A.

Alcimus: High Priest at Jerusalem, appointed by the Syrian king Deme-
trius Soter in opposition to the nationalistic party of the Maccabees.
According to Josephus, the Hebrew form of his name is Jakim. We
know no good of him, but all our knowledge comes from hostile
sources. See 1 Macc. 7,5ff; 11,54ff; 2 Macc. 14,3ff; Josephus, *Ant.*
Jud., 12,9,7.

Alexander: (1) Alexander the Great (356–323 BC), son of Philip II of
Macedon, whom he succeeded after Philip's assassination in 336 BC;
military commander of unsurpassed genius, and founder of the
short-lived Macedonian empire. When Augustine speaks of Alexan-
der's letter to his mother Olympias reporting the remarks of the
Egyptian priest Leo (VIII,5; 27; XII,11), his source is Plutarch, *Alex.*,
27. (2) The Alexander mentioned at XVIII,45 is Alexander Jannaeus,
also called Jannes, the successor of Aristobulus as king and High
Priest at Jerusalem. He was succeeded by his widow Alexandra, who
reigned from 79 to 69. When she died, her two sons Aristobulus II
and Hyrcanus quarrelled over the succession and appealed to Pom-
pey's legate, Scaurus, for help. See Josephus, *Ant. Jud.*, 12,10,2f;
12,12,17; 12,16,1; 13,11; 14,1.

Alexandra: see Alexander (2).

Allecto: a deity of the underworld, described by Virgil (*Aen.*, 7,323ff)
as 'a maker of grief, who delights in war, in violence open and con-
cealed, and in hurtful quarrels'. She is a daughter of Pluto.

Altor and Rusor: these two earth gods mentioned by Augustine at VII,23
are now unknown from any other source. Altor means 'Nourisher'
and Rusor 'Returner'.

Alypius: a lifelong friend of Augustine, converted to Christianity at the
same time; he became bishop of Thagaste. See *Confess.*, 6,7,11;
6,10,16; 9,4,7.

Amalthea: one of the nurses of the infant Zeus/Jupiter on Mount Ida,
who kept him hidden from Kronos, who wanted to eat him. She was
later changed into the star Capella. In some versions of the legend,
she is represented as a she-goat.

Ambrose: Christian saint and bishop of Milan from ca. 374 to 397. It
was primarily under his influence that Augustine was converted to
Christianity. He played a prominent part in the Church's struggle
to have the statue of Victory removed from the Senate House; he is
also noted for his successful confrontations with the empress Justina
and the emperor Theodosius. An informative life was written ca. 422
at the suggestion of St Augustine by Paulinus the Deacon (*Vita*
Sancti Ambrosii . . . a Paulino . . . conscripta, ed. and trans. Sr. M. S.
Kaniecka, OSF (Washington, 1928)).

- Ammonius: a distinguished physician involved in the treatment of Innocentius (q.v.). He is unknown apart from Augustine's reference at XXII,8.
- Amphion: son of Antiope by Jupiter. By the magical power of his lyre he drew to himself the stones from which the walls of Thebes were built. He killed himself after his children were slain by Apollo and Diana.
- Amulius: see Aemulius.
- Amyntas: the eighteenth king of the Assyrians. According to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome, he was ruling at the time of the death of Joshua the son of Nun.
- Anaxagoras: Anaxagoras of Clazomenae (ca. 500–428 BC); philosopher, astronomer and natural scientist. He came from Clazomenae to Athens in 480, probably with the army of Xerxes, and is said to have been the first philosopher to teach there.
- Anaximander: Anaximander of Miletus (ca. 610–540 BC); philosopher, natural scientist, astronomer and cartographer; a pupil of Thales. He taught that all things come forth from an undifferentiated, infinite first principle which he called *apeiron*. Augustine's account of his philosophy at VIII,2 is not very accurate.
- Anaximenes: Anaximenes of Miletus (fl. 546 BC); philosopher, astronomer and physical scientist; a pupil of Anaximander. He taught that the basic constituent of all things is air in various states of condensation and rarefaction.
- Anchises: member of the royal house of Troy with whom Aphrodite/Venus fell in love and to whom she bore Aeneas. He is said to have been blinded or paralysed by an avenging thunderbolt from Zeus. In the *Aeneid*, he is borne from the ruins of Troy on his son's shoulders, and accompanies him on his wanderings.
- Ancus Marcius: traditionally the fourth king of Rome (642–617 BC). His reign is said to have coincided with that of Josiah in Jerusalem and with the career of the prophet Jeremiah (see XVIII,33).
- Andromache: wife of Hector, who, after the fall of Troy, fell into the hands of Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, surnamed Pyrrhus ('Redhead'), to whom she bore three sons, Molosus, Pielus and Pergamus.
- Andromeda: see Perseus (2).
- Anebo: see Porphyry.
- Annaeus Seneca: see Seneca.
- Antaeus: Libyan giant who forced all strangers to wrestle with him, putting them to death if he beat them, as he invariably did. He was eventually slain by Hercules. Because he was a son of Terra, Earth,

he drew strength from contact with his mother, and Hercules could only overcome him by holding him off the ground. This story is additional to the traditional twelve labours of Hercules. See Apollodorus, 2,5,10.

Antiochus: (1) Antiochus III, 'the Great' (ca. 242–187 BC), king of Syria, defeated by L. Cornelius Scipio at the battle of Mount Sipylus in Thessaly, 190 BC. (2) Antiochus 'king of Syria', mentioned at XVIII,45, is Antiochus Epiphanes, whose attempt to eradicate Judaism in 168 BC provoked the Maccabean uprising. For vivid accounts see 1 Macc. 1,20ff; 2 Macc. 5,11ff; Josephus, *Ant. Jud.*, 12,5,4. (3) Antiochus of Ascalon (130–68 BC), Academic philosopher; he abandoned the scepticism professed in the Academy since Arcesilaus and sought to harmonise the tenets of Plato and the Stoics. He was a teacher of Cicero: see *Acad. prior.*, 2,21,67.

Antisthenes: Greek philosopher (ca. 444–368 BC); considered to be the founder of the Cynic school of philosophy (cf. Diogenes Laertius, 6,1). He taught that happiness is based on virtue and that virtue is based on knowledge. He is said to have been one of the most devoted followers of Socrates.

Antoninus: Titus Aurelius Antoninus Pius, Roman emperor from 138 to 151 and a jurist of considerable reputation. Despite what Augustine says at XVIII,52, he was not a persecutor of the Christians to any significant extent.

Antony: Marcus Antonius (82–30 BC). Served under Julius Caesar in Gaul and was consul with him in 44 BC. After Caesar's death, he was reviled in Cicero's *Philippics* as a traitor to liberty. Joined Lepidus and Octavian (i.e. the future Augustus) in a triumvirate which proscribed many leading republicans, including Cicero. After the defeat of Brutus and Cassius at Philippi in 42 BC, he controlled the forces of the eastern empire. His association with the Egyptian queen Cleopatra after 41 BC caused him to be increasingly suspected of disloyalty at Rome. War broke out between him and Octavian in 32, and he was defeated at the naval battle of Actium in 31. He committed suicide in Egypt in 30.

Apis: the third king of the Argives, ruling at the time of Isaac's death. He later came to be identified with the Egyptian Osiris and was worshipped under the name of Serapis, this name being, apparently, a conflation of Apis and Osiris.

Apollo: Greek god, son of Zeus and Leto and brother of the goddess Artemis. A symbol of light; hence the frequent epithet Phoebus, 'Shining'. Associated with the island of Delos (his birthplace) and the Oracle at Delphi. Usually depicted as a god of great beauty and

- stature. See also xviii,13. The suggestion there that there is more than one Apollo probably comes from Cicero, *De nat. deor.*, 3,23,57.
- Apuleius: Lucius Apuleius Aufer (b. ca. AD 123); poet, philosopher, traveller, rhetorician and eccentric. He was the hero of a celebrated lawsuit in which he was accused, by his wife's disappointed suitor, of having won her by magic arts. His defence is presented in his flamboyant *Apologia*, also called *Pro se de magia*. Augustine also refers to his equally flamboyant *De deo Socratis*, to his treatise *De mundo*, and to his best known work, *De asino aureo*.
- Aquila: the Aquila mentioned at xv,23 and xviii,43 was, according to Epiphanius (*De mensuris et ponderibus*, 14), a relation by marriage of the emperor Hadrian. Expelled from the Christian Church for practising sorcery, he was converted to Judaism and produced (ca. 140) an extremely literal translation of the Old Testament into Greek. He is reputed to have deliberately weakened the force of those passages which seem to prophesy the coming of Christ. His translation was, however, approved by the emperor Justinian.
- Aratus: Aratus of Soli (ca. 315–240 BC); Stoic philosopher, poet and astronomer. His best known work is the poem called *Phaenomena*, quoted by St Paul at Acts 15,28. This is a paraphrase of a treatise, also called *Phaenomena*, by Eudoxus of Cnidus.
- Arcesilaus: Academic philosopher (316–242 BC) who introduced into the Academy of Athens the scepticism which was to characterise its approach to philosophy for two hundred years. For this reason he is said to be the founder of the 'Middle Academy' – not, as Augustine says at xix,1, the New Academy, of which Carneades is usually regarded as the founder. See, however, Cicero, *De leg.*, 1,13,39.
- Archelaus. Greek philosopher; a contemporary and pupil of Anaxagoras; said to have been the teacher of Socrates. He apparently regarded all ethical judgments as conventional; he distinguished between man's natural impulses and dispositions and the dictates of human moral laws, holding the former to be superior guides to conduct.
- Ares: see Mars.
- Argus: son of Apis and his successor as king of the Argives, who take their name from him.
- Arion of Methymna: a wealthy poet and musician of Corinth, said to have been thrown overboard while returning from Italy by sailors intending to rob him. A dolphin, charmed by his song, bore him ashore. The story comes from Herodotus 1,23 and Ovid, *Fast.*, 2,113.
- Aristippus: Aristippus of Cyrene; Greek philosopher (ca. 435–366 BC); founder of the Cyrenaic school, he taught that sensory pleasure is

- the proper end of life. All pleasures are equal in value, but differ in degree and duration; they should be controlled and moderated by reason.
- Aristobulus: Aristobulus I, also called Judah. Son and successor (in 106 BC) of the first Hasmonean king of the Jews, John Hyrcanus. He was appointed High Priest by his father. For Aristobulus II see Alexander (2).
- Aristodemus: Athenian statesman and former actor; one of the ten emissaries sent to negotiate peace with Philip of Macedon after the fall of Olynthus, 347 BC.
- Aristonicus: when the kingdom of Pergamum was bequeathed to Rome after the death of Attalus III in 133 BC, Aristonicus led a popular rising against Rome. He was captured and executed in Rome in 129 BC. On Augustine's mistake at III,11, see J. E. C. Welldon, *De Civitate Dei*, I, p. 111, n. 2.
- Aristotle: Greek philosopher and scientist (384–322 BC); born in Stagira in Thrace; studied in Athens under Plato. After Plato's death he at one point became the tutor of the future Alexander the Great. He is said to have written some four hundred works. Those which survive consist largely of lecture notes and similar material collected and edited after his death: for the most part, during the first century BC.
- Armamitres: the eighth king of the Assyrians. According to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome, his rule coincided with the life of Isaac.
- Arrius: king of Assyria at the time of the birth of Isaac. The *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome calls him the fourth king, not the fifth, as Augustine says at XVIII,3.
- Ascanius: son of Aeneas by Creusa and founder of Alba Longa, the mother-city of Rome; also called Iulus, Ilus, Dardanus and Leontodamus.
- Ascatades: king of the Assyrians at the time of the Exodus from Egypt.
- Asclepius: see Aesculapius.
- Assaracus: king of Troy and great-grandfather of Aeneas; hence 'Assaracus's house' in the quotation from the *Aeneid* given by Augustine at V,12 = the Romans, as descendants of Aeneas.
- Athamas: see Ino.
- Atlas: son of Jupiter and Clymene, brother of Prometheus; eventually turned to stone by Perseus using the head of Medusa. The story of his holding up the sky is at Hesiod, *Theog.*, 517ff; 746.
- Attis: a Phrygian deity and consort of the goddess Cybele; he castrated himself in a fit of madness and died. Zeus allowed his spirit to pass into a pine tree, while violets sprang from his blood. Like Adonis, he is a vegetation god whose myth symbolises the death and revival of plant life. See also Galli.

- Augustus: Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus, first emperor of Rome (27 BC–AD 14); great-nephew and adopted son and heir of Julius Caesar. With Mark Antony and Lepidus he was victorious in the civil war against his uncle's assassins Brutus and Cassius. He subsequently quarrelled with Antony and defeated him at Actium in 31 BC. Thereafter, he was effectively in sole command of Rome.
- Aurelian: Flavius Claudius Aurelianus, Roman emperor from 270 to 275. Despite what Augustine says at XVIII,52, he does not seem to have persecuted the Christians to any great extent. It is said that he intended to launch a persecution, but was assassinated before it could take effect. See Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*, 7,30.
- Aurelius: bishop of Carthage, ca. 391–430, and a correspondent and close friend of Augustine (see, e.g., *Epist.* 128,4; 129,7); involved in the miraculous cure of Innocentius (q.v.).
- Aventinus: the twelfth king of the Latins after Aeneas, and the first to be deified after his death. It is said that the Aventine hill derives its name from the fact that he was buried there; although, as Augustine notes at XVIII,21, other etymologies are possible. See Varro, *De ling. Lat.*, 5,43.
- Bacchantes or Bacchae: female votaries of Bacchus/Dionysus, whose violent excesses of behaviour while in the throes of religious frenzy are depicted in *The Bacchae* of Euripides. The Bacchanalia, or orgies of Bacchus, became established in Italy early in the second century BC, and were abolished by Senatorial decree in 186 BC.
- Baebius: Marcus Baebius; supporter of Sulla, put to death when Marius and Cinna entered Rome in 87 BC. Augustine's memory seems to be faulty at III,27f. It is Baebius who is said to have been 'torn to pieces by the hands of the executioners, without swords'.
- Balbus: Quintus Lucilius Balbus; a minor Stoic philosopher and interlocutor in Cicero's *De natura deorum*, where he disapproves of stories and images which bring discredit to the gods. Said to have been the exponent of Stoic doctrines in Cicero's lost dialogue *Hortensius*.
- Baleus: the tenth king of Assyria according to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome; not to be confused with Xerxes (q.v.), also called Baleus.
- Bassus: a Syrian resident in Hippo whose daughter was raised from the dead by the miraculous agency of St Stephen.
- Bathanarius: a senior Roman official in Africa during Augustine's lifetime; but nothing is known of him apart from the story reported by Augustine at XXI,4 in connexion with Severus of Milevis.
- Bellerophon: Greek hero who slew the fire-breathing monster called the Chimaera; he accomplished this feat with the aid of the winged horse Pegasus. He was worshipped as a hero at Corinth and had a sanctuary in a cypress grove near the town (see Pausanias, 2,2,4).

- Bellona: the Roman goddess of war, identified with the Greek goddess Enyo. Sometimes portrayed as the wife of Mars.
- Belocus or Belochus: the ninth king of the Assyrians according to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome, reigning at the time of God's promise to Jacob.
- Belus: traditionally the first king of Assyria; the father of Ninus (Herodotus, 1,7). But Bel/Belus is also the Hellenised form of the name of the Semitic deity Ba'al, and the two may be one and the same in origin.
- Berecynthia: synonymous with Cybele; the name is derived from the centre of her worship at Mount Berecynthus in Phrygia.
- Bias of Priene: see Seven Sages.
- Brutus: Lucius Junius Brutus, nephew of Tarquinius Superbus who led the rising against the Tarquins and liberated the city. He was one of the first two Roman consuls, the other being Tarquinius Collatinus. Livy (2,3) is the source of the story that he put his own sons to death for conspiring to restore the Tarquins. The story of his death in combat simultaneously with Arruns, son of Tarquinius Superbus, is at Livy, 2,6 and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 5,14.
- Bubona: Roman goddess associated with the protection of cattle.
- Busiris: son of Neptune by Libya, daughter of Ephesus; he was an Egyptian tyrant who, in order to ward off drought, sacrificed all visitors to Egypt to Zeus. He was eventually slain by Hercules (but see Isocrates, *Busiris*, 15).
- Cacus or Kakos: a giant, son of Vulcan, who inhabited a cave on the Aventine. When Hercules was driving home the oxen of Geryon, Cacus attempted to steal some of them and was slain by Hercules. The story is at Virgil, *Aen.*, 8,190ff.
- Caecilius: Caecilius Statius (d. 168 BC); Roman comic poet. He was highly regarded by his contemporaries, but only a few fragments of his forty plays survive, the largest being only seventeen lines long.
- Caelestis: a Carthaginian goddess, probably synonymous with, or assimilated to, Cybele.
- Caesar: (1) The Caesar mentioned at 1,23f, V,12, IX,5, etc., is of course Gaius Julius Caesar; Roman patrician, general, statesman, historian, and sole dictator in Rome after his defeat of Pompey at Pharsalus in 48 BC. (2) The Caesars whose deaths Augustine records at III,27 are Lucius Caesar, consul in 90 BC, and his brother, the orator Gaius Caesar Strabo Vopiscus, who appears as one of the interlocutors in Cicero's *De oratore*.
- Camena: a goddess of song of this name mentioned by Varro, *De ling. Lat.*, 7,27; but the Camena are also prophetic water nymphs

- associated with the sacred spring outside the Porta Capena from which the Vestals drew the water for their ceremonies. They came to be identified with the Greek muses (Ovid, *Fast.*, 3,275).
- Camilla: pursued by her enemies, her father Metabus saved her from capture by throwing her across a river tied to his spear, having vowed that he would dedicate her to Diana if her life might be spared. She was eventually killed by the Etruscan hero Arruns. The story is in Virgil, *Aen.*, 11,539ff.
- Camillus: see Marcus Camillus.
- Carbo: Gnaeus Papirius Carbo; tribune in 93 BC; a political ally of Marius and Cinna. Consul (with Cinna) in 85 and 84, and (with the younger Marius) in 82.
- Carmentes: according to Aulus Gellius (*Noct. Att.*, 16,16), the Carmentes are called Prorsa and Postversa. They seem to be goddesses presiding over childbirth: Prorsa is 'Head First' and Postversa is 'Feet First'. Earlier sources name a divine being called Carmenta or Carmentis. Cf. Ovid, *Fast.*, 1,633; Livy, 1,7.
- Cassius: Gaius Cassius Longinus; Roman soldier and public figure; praetor, 44 BC; probably the chief of those who conspired against Julius Caesar. After Caesar's death he entered Syria (in 43 BC) and levied a tribute of 700 talents on the Jews. See Crassus.
- Castor and Pollux: twin sons of Leda and Zeus, and hence brothers of Helen of Troy; associated with battle, horses and the protection of sailors. Traditionally, their cult was introduced into Rome after they fought on the Roman side in the battle of Lake Regillus in 484 BC.
- Castor: grammarian and historian, frequently cited by Eusebius of Caesarea, and apparently a contemporary of Julius Caesar. He is variously described as a native of Rhodes, Marseilles or Galatia.
- Catiline: Lucius Sergius Catilina (110–62 BC); Roman political adventurer. Having failed to be elected consul for 63 BC (he was defeated by Cicero), he introduced a radical programme of debt cancellation and land reform. After a second defeat, he embarked on a serious but unsuccessful conspiracy which was to involve the assassination of Cicero and the occupation of the city. He fled from Rome in 63 and was defeated and killed near Pistoria.
- Catius: a Roman god, apparently of shrewdness or prudence, but unknown apart from Augustine's reference to him at IV,21.
- Cato: (1) the Cato to whom Augustine refers at I,5 (erroneously), I,23 and 24, V,12 and XIX,4 is Marcus Porcius Cato the younger, called 'Uticensis' (94–46 BC), a Stoic philosopher, noted for his inflexible rectitude. An ally of Pompey, he committed suicide after Caesar's defeat of Pompey's supporters at the battle of Thapsus in 46 BC. (2)

- The Cato mentioned at 1,30, who favoured the obliteration of Carthage, is M. Porcius Cato 'the Censor' (234–149 BC), the great-grandfather of the other Cato, also a byword for puritanism and austerity.
- Catosus: a cook of Hippo, involved in the miracle by which Florentius (q.v.) was provided with money to buy a new cloak.
- Catulus: Quintus Lutatius Catulus; Roman soldier and noted political conservative; consul in 78 BC (see Lepidus); said to have committed suicide by inhaling the fumes from a charcoal fire. Augustine's mention at III,27 of a Catulus who poisoned himself during the Marian persecutions of 87 BC seems to be a mistake.
- Cecrops: mythical first king of Attica. According to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome he ruled at the time of the Exodus from Egypt.
- Cerberus: the many-headed guardian of the entrance to Hades, eventually tamed by Hercules. See, e.g., Hesiod, *Theog.*, 310ff.
- Ceres: Roman goddess of grain and fruits; mother of Proserpine; identified with the Greek Demeter. Augustine suggests (IV,10) – perhaps on the strength of Macrobius, *Saturn.*, 1,21 and Arnobius, *Adv. gent.*, 3,32 – that Ceres, Vesta and Venus are one and the same. The Eleusinian mysteries of Ceres, to which Augustine refers at VII,20, attracted visitors from all Greece.
- Chaeremon: Stoic philosopher and historian of Egyptian origin; his writings on Egyptian religious practices are mentioned and praised by St Jerome (*Adv. Jovinian*, 2,13). He is said to have been the chief librarian of the great library at Alexandria.
- Chilon of Sparta: see Seven Sages.
- Chrysippus: Athenian philosopher (ca. 280–207 BC); successor of Cleanthes as head of the Stoic school. He was an extraordinarily prolific writer (see Diogenes Laertius, 7,189ff), but none of his works survive.
- Cicero: Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BC). Roman orator, statesman, philosopher and man of letters; consul in 63 BC. Augustine refers to him over seventy times. His philosophy is eclectic, superficial and inconclusive. Augustine's backhanded compliment at II,27, that he 'was a distinguished man and by way of being a philosopher' is not unjust.
- Cinna: Lucius Cornelius Cinna, Roman patrician; consul 87 BC, but forced to leave Rome by political opponents. Rival of Sulla and ally of Marius, with whom he returned to occupy Rome late in 87 BC.
- Circe: a witch or sea-nymph who dwelt on the island of Aeaea. Her special talent was the turning of people into animals (see Picus). She turned the companions of Odysseus into pigs; but he was able to resist her magic with the aid of the God Mercury (*Od.*, 10).

- Claudian: Claudius Claudianus; Roman poet, born *ca.* 370. An Alexandrian Greek, he lived at the Roman imperial court from 395 onwards. Nothing is known of him after 404. Much of his poetry is in the form of obsequious panegyrics addressed to the emperor Honorius and his minister Flavius Stilicho.
- Cleobulus of Lindus: see Seven Sages.
- Cleombrotus: an Academic philosopher of Ambracia, who committed suicide after reading Plato's *Phaedo*, wishing to exchange this life for a better one. The story has several sources; but Augustine (1,22) seems to derive it from Cicero, *Tusc. disp.*, 1,34,84.
- Cleon: violent and popular Athenian demagogue (d. 422 BC) of the time of the Peloponnesian War; satirised by Aristophanes.
- Cleophon: Athenian demagogue; a contemporary of Cleon, and also satirised by Aristophanes. He was instrumental in the restoration of democracy in Athens after the battle of Cyzicus (410). He was tried and executed in 404 by the Oligarchs.
- Cloacina: Cloacina or Cluacina is probably an epithet of Venus meaning 'Purifier'. Somewhat disingenuously, Augustine insists on regarding her as a goddess of sewers (*cloacae*).
- Codrus: king and hero of the Athenians who voluntarily devoted himself to death, having learned in a dream that the Spartans would *not* triumph if they killed the king of Athens. Augustine's remark at xviii,19 that he was worshipped as a god does not seem to be correct, however.
- Collatina and Vallonia: Roman goddesses of hills and valleys respectively; not known elsewhere in the extant Latin literature. Probably known to Augustine from Varro.
- Collatinus: Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus; cousin of Tarquinius Superbus, husband of Lucretia, and one of the first two consuls of the Republic after the expulsion of the Tarquins in 510 BC. There is no apparent warrant for Augustine's assertion (iii,16) that Collatinus was driven from the city by Junius Brutus. According to Livy (2,2), he went into voluntary exile at Lavinium because the people mistrusted the name of Tarquin.
- Concord; Concordia: her principal temple, near the forum, was dedicated by Camillus in 367 BC, restored by L. Opimius in 121 BC and restored again by Tiberius in AD 10.
- Constantine: Flavius Valerius Constantinus, 'the Great', Roman emperor from 306 to 337. He was converted to Christianity in 312, thanks to a vision before his decisive battle against Maxentius at the Milvian bridge. His Edict of Milan of 313 proclaimed toleration of Christianity and brought official persecution of the Church to an end.

- Consus: an agricultural god; Augustine's association of his name with *consilium* at IV,11 seems wrong.
- Corax: the sixteenth king of the Sicyonians, ruling at the time of the death of Joshua the son of Nun.
- Cotta: Gaius Aurelius Cotta; Academic philosopher, public figure and orator; consul in 75 BC and subsequently governor of Cisalpine Gaul; one of the interlocutors in Cicero's *De oratore* and *De natura deorum*.
- Cranaus: successor of Cecrops as second king of Attica.
- Crassus: (1) Marcus Licinius Crassus; Roman soldier and statesman; consul in 70 BC; member, with Caesar and Pompey, of the First Triumvirate. It was Crassus, and not Cassius, as Augustine says at XVIII,45, who looted the Temple at Jerusalem in 53 BC. (2) The Crassi whose deaths Augustine mentions at III,27 are the father and brother of the Triumvir, both of whom were called Publius Licinius Crassus. It is said that the father committed suicide after his son was killed before his eyes by the soldiers of Fimbria during the Marian persecutions of 87 BC.
- Creusa: see Ascanius.
- Criasus: the fifth king of the Argives. According to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome, he ruled at the time of the birth of Moses.
- Cunina: Roman goddess of the cradle and protector of infants.
- Curiatii: see Horatii.
- Curtius: Marcus Curtius; the Roman hero who, to save his country, leaped armed and on horseback into the pit which had suddenly opened up in the forum. An oracle had declared that the pit would never close unless Rome's greatest treasure – an armed man – were cast into it.
- Cybele: Originally a Phrygian goddess, her worship was introduced into Rome in 204 BC (see P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica under Scipio). She is variously called Berecynthia, the Great Mother and the Mother of the Gods. At VI,8, Augustine mentions an identification of her with the earth. See also VII,24, and Tellus.
- Cynocephalus: a dog-headed deity introduced into Rome from Egypt; no doubt the same as the Egyptian jackal-god Anubis (see Lucan, *Phars.*, 8,851f; Virgil, *Aen.*, 8,689).
- Cyprian: Thascius Caecilius Cyprianus (200–258); the son of wealthy parents, he became bishop of Carthage in 248, shortly after his baptism. He died during the persecution of the Church under the emperor Valerian. His letters and other writings give insights into the difficulties suffered by the Church as a result of the persecution of the emperor Decius.
- Cyrus: Cyrus 'the Great' of Persia (559–529 BC), conqueror of Lydia, Babylonia, Assyria, Syria and Palestine, and founder of the

- Achaemenid Persian empire. In 538 BC he allowed fifty thousand Jews to return from captivity.
- Daedalus: Athenian craftsman and architect who built the labyrinth at Crete. Imprisoned by King Minos, he made wings by means of which he and his son Icarus were able to fly to freedom; but Icarus flew too close to the sun: the heat melted the wax which held the wings together and he perished.
- Danae: daughter of Acrisius, king of Argos; imprisoned by him because an oracle said that a son of hers would kill him. She was visited by Zeus in the form of a shower of gold, and gave birth to Perseus (2), who eventually killed Acrisius by accident.
- Danaus: the tenth king of the Argives. According to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome, he ruled at the time of the death of Joshua the son of Nun.
- Darius: ruler of the Persian empire from 521 to 486 BC; noted for his efficient administration and construction of roads, and for building the new city of Persepolis as his capital. According to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome, the restoration of the Temple at Jerusalem was completed in the second year of his reign; but, despite what Augustine says at XVIII,26, the Jewish captivity is usually reckoned to have ended in 538 BC.
- Decii: Roman heroes, father and son. Before going into battle against the Latins, Publius Decius Mus, consul in 340, dreamed that one army would lose its entire force, the other its leader. Thereupon, he dedicated himself to the gods of the underworld and charged the enemy alone, losing his life but purchasing a great victory for Rome. His son of the same name is said to have done the same at the battle of Sentinum in 295 (see Livy, 8,9; 10,28).
- Decius: an Illyrian who became Roman emperor in 249. He instituted a violent persecution of the Christians, probably in an attempt to restore the ancient patriotic values of the empire and purify it of foreign influences. This was the first fully organised, empire-wide attempt to stamp out the Christian faith.
- Demaenetus: the Demaenetus of whom Augustine speaks at XVIII,17 is not known from any other source. See, however, Isidore of Seville, *Etym.*, 8,9,5.
- Deucalion: son of Prometheus; king of Phthiotis in Thessaly; husband of Pyrrha. It was in his day that Jupiter, disgusted by the corrupt state of the world, sent a great flood to destroy it. Only Deucalion and Pyrrha were saved, having been warned by Prometheus to build and provision a ship. See Ovid, *Met.*, 1,262ff.
- Deverra: see Silvanus.

- Diana: Roman goddess identified with the Greek Artemis; sister of Apollo; associated with hunting, wooded places, women, childbirth and the moon.
- Diespater: a synonym for Jupiter. Like so many of his etymologies, Augustine's at iv,11 is wrong. Cf. Varro, *De ling. Lat.*, 5,66.
- Diocletian: G. Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus; Roman emperor, jointly with Maximian, from 284 to 305, when they both abdicated. He was initially tolerant of Christianity, but in 303 ordered the burning of Scriptures and the destruction of churches. A general persecution ensued, and continued after his abdication.
- Diogenes: (1) the Diogenes whom Augustine mentions at viii,2 is Diogenes of Apollonia, an eclectic philosopher, probably a contemporary of Anaxagoras. He is satirised in Aristophanes's *Clouds* and criticised by Cicero (*De nat. deor.*, 1,12,29. (2) The Diogenes mentioned at xiv,20 is the famous Diogenes of Sinope (ca. 400–325 BC): Athenian philosopher, noted eccentric and widely (though wrongly: see Antisthenes) regarded as the founder of the Cynic school. Diogenes was called 'Cynic' (= 'Canine') either because he taught and practised extreme poverty and asceticism, or because of his revolting habits (although see Diogenes Laertius, 6,1,13).
- Diomedes or Diomede: leader of the men of Argos and Tiryns in the expedition against Troy. Depicted in the *Iliad* as wise, intrepid and disciplined (e.g. *Il.*, 5,1ff; 6,119ff; 10,219ff) and associated in a number of exploits with Ulysses/Odysseus. Subsequently deified: see xviii,16.
- Dion of Naples: see Adrastus of Cyzicus.
- Dionysus: the Greek and Roman god of wine and poets; son of Jupiter and Semele; also called Bacchus and Liber.
- Dis Pater: synonymous with Pluto and Orcus.
- Discord; Discordia: the Roman version of the Greek Eris, or Strife. Offended at not being invited to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, she threw a golden apple into the midst of the assembled deities, and gave Paris the task of awarding it as a prize to the fairest. The resultant chain of events led eventually to the Trojan War.
- Domiducus: Roman god whose function is to lead the new bride home (Martianus Capella, *De nuptiis Mercurii et Philologiae*, 2,149). 'Domiduca' and 'Iterduca' are also epithets of Juno, considered as presiding over homeward and outward journeys respectively: see *City of God*, vii,3; Tertullian, *Ad nat.*, 2,11; Martianus Capella, 2,149.
- Domitian: Titus Flavius Domitianus, Roman emperor from 81 until his assassination in 96; known to posterity for his ruthlessness and cruelty. He was a persecutor of Christians, but contemporary

- non-Christian sources (Juvenal, Tacitus, Suetonius and the younger Pliny) also speak ill of him.
- Domitius: Roman god apparently having to do with the new bride's installation in the matrimonial home; but the name is unknown other than from Augustine's reference at VI,9.
- Dusii: the *dusii* mentioned at XV,23 are Gallic sprites or goblins noted for their sexual versatility. They are mentioned also by Bede (*Luc.*, 438) and Osbern of Gloucester (*Liber derivationum*, 161).
- Educa: see Potina.
- Egeria: a water-nymph, traditionally the wife of Numa Pompilius.
- Eleazar: High Priest at Jerusalem during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, to whom Ptolemy sent a deputation requesting a copy of the Hebrew Scriptures for inclusion at the library at Alexandria. Ptolemy's letter and Eleazar's reply are recorded at Josephus, *Ant. Jud.*, 12,2,4f.
- Eleusinus: a resident of Hippo whose infant son was raised from the dead at the miraculous intervention of St Stephen.
- Ennius: Quintus Ennius (239–169 BC); Roman poet and tragedian. Known chiefly for his *Annales* in eighteen books of hexameters. Some six hundred lines of this survive, as do the titles and some fragments of over twenty of his tragedies.
- Epaphus: the legendary builder of Memphis in Egypt; son of Jupiter Ammon and Io.
- Epictetus: Stoic philosopher (AD 55–135); a former slave who taught that happiness is achieved only by trust in providence and indifference to the world. The book which Augustine mentions at IX,4 is the *Enchiridion* of his pupil Flavius Arrianus, a summary of Epictetus's teaching.
- Epicurus: Epicurus of Samos (341–271 BC), founder of the philosophical system which bears his name, based largely on the atomic theory of Democritus. In ethics, Epicurus taught that the gods do not concern themselves with human affairs and so need not be feared or appeased. Human beings are therefore free to pursue their natural goal of happiness and tranquillity by emancipating themselves from worldly goals.
- Eratus: king of the Sicyonians at the time of Jacob's death. He is apparently the same as the Penatus mentioned by Pausanias at 2,5,5.
- Erichthonius: the fourth king of Attica. According to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome, he ruled at the time of the death of Joshua the son of Nun.
- Eucharius: a Spanish presbyter dwelling at Calama, a city of Numidia some few miles south of Hippo. He was healed of the stone and subsequently raised from the dead by the relics of St Stephen.

- Eudoxus: Eudoxus of Cnidus (ca. 390–340 BC); Greek mathematician, astronomer and geographer. He is said to have been the first to construct a mathematical system to explain the apparent movement of the heavenly bodies. He is the author of the treatise *Phaenomena* which was turned into verse by Aratus of Soli.
- Eugenius: Flavius Eugenius; proclaimed as emperor after the death of Valentinian II in 392, but failed to secure the recognition of Theodosius I, who defeated and killed him in 394. Nominally Christian, he nonetheless restored the statue of Victory to its place in the Senate House.
- Euhemerus: Euhemerus of Messene (fl. 300 BC); Cyrenaic philosopher who advanced the theory that certain of the gods of mythology (e.g. Asclepius) were deified human beings. See Henry Tudor, *Political Myth* (London, 1972), Ch.1.
- Europa: daughter of Agenor of Tyre; carried off to Crete by Zeus in the form of a bull, or by a bull sent by Zeus. She bore him three sons, Rhadamanthus, Sarpedon and Minos, and subsequently became the wife of Xanthus or Asterius, king of Crete.
- Europs: second king of the Sicyonians. According to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome, he ruled at the time of Abraham's birth.
- Eusebius: Eusebius Pamphilus (ca. 260–340); Christian apologist, scriptural commentator and ecclesiastical historian; became bishop of Caesarea in 314. The best known of his many writings is his *Historia ecclesiastica*. His *Chronicon*, a summary of world history down to 303, now survives only in the Latin translation and continuation of St Jerome.
- Evodius: a bishop of Uzali who established a shrine there to the martyr Stephen. Augustine refers to him several times in his writings (e.g. *Serm.*, 323,3; 244.)
- Fabius: Quintus Fabius Maximus Verrucosus Cunctator; Roman general of the third century BC. He was appointed dictator after the Carthaginian victory at Lake Trasimene in 217. The story of his sparing the gods of Tarentum (*City of God*, 1,6) is at Livy, 27,15f, and Plutarch, *Fabius Maximus*, 21f.
- Fabricius: Gaius Fabricius Luscinus; one of the ambassadors sent to Pyrrhus in the winter of 280–279 BC. The story of his refusal to be bought off by Pyrrhus is one of the stock illustrations of old-fashioned Roman probity. See Plutarch, *Pyrrhus*, 20; Eutropius, 2,12.
- Faith; Fides: Roman goddess personifying good faith. According to Livy (1,21), her cult was introduced by Numa Pompilius; but her temple on the Capitol mentioned by Cicero (*De offic.*, 3,24,104) is no older than 254 BC.

- Faunus: a Roman woodland deity and mythical second king of the Laurentines; son of Picus; guardian of crops and herds, later identified with Pan.
- Faustulus: the shepherd who, with his wife Acca or Acca Larentia, found and brought up the infants Romulus and Remus.
- Faustus: a Manichaean bishop whom Augustine met at Carthage in ca. 383, and whom he found amiable but unimpressive. Faustus's inability to answer Augustine's questions satisfactorily contributed substantially to Augustine's disillusionment with Manichaeism.
- Fear and Dread: Pavor and Pallor; their worship was introduced into Rome by Tullus Hostilius. According to Augustine at VI,10, Pallor was specifically associated with the change of colour occasioned by fear.
- Felicitas; Felicitas: Roman goddess of good luck; unknown before the middle of the second century BC, however, when Lucius Licinius Lucullus dedicated a temple to her on the Velabrum. Her cult became important under the emperors.
- Fessona: apparently a goddess who is the protectress of the weary; but unknown apart from Augustine's mention at IV,21.
- Fever; Febris: she had three temples in Rome, in which *remedia* – possibly amulets – which had proved efficacious were placed. Cicero mentions her temple on the Palatine at *De nat. deor.*, 3,25,63. Some authorities associate her particularly with malaria. She is sometimes also called Tertiana and Quartana.
- Fimbria: Gaius Flavius Fimbria, a partisan of Marius in the Civil War against Sulla; noted for his ruthlessness and cruelty. Committed suicide in 84 BC to avoid falling into Sulla's hands. For his conduct at Troy, censured by Augustine at III,7, see Livy, 83; Appian, *De bell. Mith.*, 53; Obsequens, *Liber prodig.*, 116.
- Flaccianus: the proconsul Flaccianus mentioned by Augustine at XVIII,23 is not known from any other source. But Augustine also mentions a Flaccianus at *Contra academicos*, I,18,6 and I,21,7, as criticising fortune-telling. It is not unlikely that the references are to the same person. In both sources Augustine refers to the great learning and distinction of Flaccianus.
- Flora: the goddess of everything that blooms. She is said to have been a Sabine deity introduced into Rome by Titus Tatius. The games celebrated in her honour – the *ludi florales* – to which Augustine refers at II,27 apparently included theatrical performances of a highly indecent character (Ovid, *Fast.*, 5,329ff).
- Florentius: a devout and poor man of Hippo who was miraculously provided with money to purchase a new cloak. The story is known only from XXII,8.

Forculus; Cardea; Limentinus: gods of the door, hinges and threshold respectively. Tertullian also mentions them (*De cor. mil.*, 13; *De idol.*, 15); so does Cyprian (*De idol. vanit.*, 4). The Carna mentioned by Ovid (*Fast.*, 6,101) is clearly the same as Cardea.

Fortune; Fortuna: Roman goddess of chance, identified with the Greek Tyche; often depicted as blind. The introduction of her worship was traditionally attributed to Servius Tullius. The Fortuna Barbata of whom Augustine makes fun at IV,11 seems to be an epithet of Fortuna considered as the especial protector of young men – i.e. of those growing a beard for the first time. The temple of Fortuna Muliebris (see IV,19) was built in 488 BC by order of the Senate at the spot on the Via Latina where Coriolanus turned back his army in response to the pleas of his mother and the Roman matrons.

Frutesca: a Roman goddess, probably synonymous with Seia.

Fulgoria: presumably the goddess of, or who protects against, lightning (*fulgor*); but the name is not known apart from Augustine's reference at VI,10.

Furius Camillus: see Marcus Camillus.

Gaius Servilius: Gaius Servilius Glaucia, a friend and ally of Lucius Saturninus; praetor in 100 BC; associated with Saturninus in the violence of his political style.

Galli: the ecstatic priests of Cybele, said to castrate themselves in imitation of Attis. The name apparently comes from the River Gallus, a tributary of the Sagaris in Phrygia, whose water made those who drank it mad.

Ganymede: a young and beautiful Trojan prince abducted by Zeus/Jupiter to be his cup bearer and homosexual lover. See Homer, *Il.*, 5,265ff; 20,232ff; but the story exists in several versions.

Gaudentius and Jovius: apparently they were officials in the service of the emperor Honorius; but nothing is known of them beyond what Augustine says at XVIII,54.

Gemini: the Gemini mentioned at XVIII,54 are Rubellus and Fufius, consuls in AD 29. They are also mentioned by Tertullian (*Adv. Jud.*, 8) and Lactantius (*Div. inst.*, 4,10).

Genius (pl. Genii): a Roman god who, according to Varro as quoted by Augustine at VII,13, 'is set over, and who has power over, everything that is begotten'; also identified with the world-soul or even with Jupiter. But Augustine also uses the term in the more usual sense (as at VII,6) to denote the attendant spirit – the 'guardian angel', as it were – of every man. Cf. Censorinus, *De die natal.*, 3; Apuleius, *De deo Socr.*, 14; Horace, *Epist.* 2,2,188.

Gnaeus Manlius: Gnaeus Manlius Vulso; Roman public figure; curule aedile in 197 BC; praetor in Sicily in 195. Commanded, as proconsul,

- an expedition against the Galatians in 189 BC, very much to his own profit. Thereafter, his name was traditionally associated with the introduction of 'oriental luxury' into Rome.
- Gorgon: the Gorgons were the daughters of Phoreus, called Stheno, Euryale and Medusa. It is to Medusa that Augustine refers at xviii, 13. She had snakes instead of hair, and all who looked on her were turned to stone. She was slain by Perseus (2), and from her blood sprang the winged horse Pegasus.
- Gracchi: Roman politicians and reformers. Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus introduced radical proposals for land reform when tribune in 133 BC. When seeking re-election, he was killed in a riot on the Capitol organised by his cousin Scipio Nasica Serapis. His more gifted brother Gaius Sempronius Gracchus became tribune in 125 and again in 122. He re-enacted his brother's reforms and introduced new ones of his own. In the midst of growing political disturbance, the *senatus consultum ultimum* was invoked against him and his supporters in 121. See also Lucius Opimius.
- Gratian: Flavius Gratianus, western Roman emperor from AD 367 to 383. A friend of St Ambrose, he was a devout Catholic and the first emperor not to use the title Pontifex Maximus; famously, he caused the statue of Victory to be removed from the Senate House. His troops deserted him at the approach of Maximus and he was assassinated.
- Great Mother: epithet of Cybele.
- Gulosus: a presbyter of the Church at Carthage ca. 391; mentioned at xxii, 8 in connection with the miraculous cure of Innocentius (q.v.).
- Hadrian: Publius Aelius Hadrianus, Roman emperor from AD 117 to 138. One of the first acts of his principate was to relinquish all the eastern conquests of his predecessor Trajan. He allowed the Parthians once more to elect an independent sovereign; withdrew Roman troops from the provinces of Armenia, Mesopotamia and Assyria; and once more established the Euphrates as the eastern frontier of the Empire. See Eutropius, 8, 3.
- Hannibal: Carthaginian general (247 to ca. 182 BC) who took command in the second Punic War in 221. He marched from Spain and crossed the Alps with a large army (including the famous elephants), won decisive victories at Lake Trasimene and Cannae, and remained in Italy for sixteen years campaigning. He was recalled to defend Carthage against Scipio Africanus Major in 203 and defeated at the battle of Zama in 202. The defeat at Cannae was the worst military disaster ever sustained by Rome.
- Health: Salus, an ancient Roman deity subsequently assimilated to the Greek Hygieia. Her Temple on the Quirinal was said to have been built in 302 BC by the dictator Gaius Junius Bubulcus.

- Hecate: Greek goddess; daughter of Perses and Asteria, sister of Latona; she presides over magic spells and incantations. She is often identified with Diana, Luna and Proserpine, and is for that reason represented with three heads.
- Helen: daughter of Zeus and Leda; wife of Menelaus; her abduction by Paris was the cause of the Trojan War.
- Helenus: Son of Priam and Hecuba; a noted soothsayer. He became the husband of Andromache after Pyrrhus had tired of her.
- Helle: see Phryxus.
- Heraclitus: Greek philosopher of Ephesus (fl. ca. 500 BC). His philosophy survives only in a handful of notoriously obscure fragments. Its chief tenets seem to have been that everything originates in and returns to fire, and exists in a state of flux.
- Hercules: the most popular of all Greek heroes (called Herakles in Greek); best known for the twelve labours imposed on him after he had killed his own children in a fit of madness sent by the goddess Hera. He was particularly popular in Rome as a defender against evil, and the Stoics had a tendency to idealise him for his fortitude and services to men. See also XVIII,12.
- Hermes Trismegistus: i.e. 'Hermes/Mercury the Thrice Great'; a fictitious personage to whom the Neoplatonists attributed all genuine philosophical knowledge; possibly he is a version of the Egyptian god Thoth (Lactantius, *Div. inst.*, I,6). Numerous treatises of philosophy and religion (the *Hermetica*) are attributed to him; also a number of works on astrology, magic and alchemy. The dialogue *Asclepius* to which Augustine refers at VIII,23 was translated into Latin by Apuleius.
- Heroes: semi-divine beings, sometimes imaginary but often originally real people (e.g. Theseus, Perseus, Hercules), believed to help the living in return for sacrifices and rites performed at their shrines or tombs.
- Heros: mentioned by Augustine at X,21 as a son of Juno/Hera, but not known from any other source.
- Hesperius: an African Christian whose household at Fussala – about forty miles away from Hippo – was miraculously delivered from the malign influence of evil spirits.
- Hesychius: bishop of Salona in Dalmatia from 405 to 426.
- Hippocrates: Hippocrates of Cos (ca. 460–390 BC); Greek physician, traditionally the first to establish medicine as a systematic art. He founded a school of medicine at the shrine of Asclepius at Cos.
- Homer: Greek epic poet, traditionally blind and traditionally the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Nothing is known of his dates or life,

however, and it is on the whole likely that the two Greek epics are recensions of earlier folk-material made by an unknown editor or editors *ca.* 700 BC.

Homogyrus: according to Augustine at xviii,6, Homogyrus was the first to use oxen for ploughing. He was struck by lightning, and given divine honours after his death. The name is not known from any other source.

Honor; Honos: Roman god personifying the honour associated with military prowess or similar virtues. Livy (27,23) mentions a temple of Honos and Virtus; see also Cicero, *In Verr.*, 54,123.

Honorius and Eutychianus: Flavius Honorius and Eutychianus were consuls in AD 398. Nothing significant is known of them, and they are mentioned by Augustine (xviii,54) for purposes of chronology only.

Honorius: son of the emperor Theodosius I. After the death of Theodosius in 395, the empire was divided between Honorius and his brother Arcadius, with Honorius ruling in the West and Arcadius in the East. Honorius's assassination of his erstwhile lieutenant, the Vandal general Stilicho, was one of the events which precipitated the sack of Rome in 410.

Horace: Quintus Horatius Flaccus (65–8 BC); Roman poet and friend of Virgil, known chiefly for his *Odes*.

Horatii: the war between Rome and Alba Longa which took place during the reign of Tullus Hostilius was decided by the 'battle of champions' between the three Horatii and the three Curiatii. This famous story, and the accompanying story of Horatia, the sister slain by her brother, is at Livy, 1,24ff.

Hortensius: Quintus Hortensius; appointed dictator of Rome in 287 BC to restore order after debt and usury had led to the final secession of the plebs to the Janiculum. Responsible for much important social legislation.

Hostilina: a goddess apparently presiding over the corn when the corn stands level in the field: i.e., when it has reached its full growth. The name is not known from any other source.

Hostilius: see Tullus Hostilius.

Hyperbolus: Athenian demagogue prominent at the time of the Peloponnesian War; satirised by Aristophanes. He was assassinated in Samos in 411 BC.

Hyrcanus: see Alexander (2).

Iamblichus: Neoplatonist philosopher (*ca.* AD 250–325); studied under Porphyry and later founded his own school. His extant works include a life of Pythagoras, a philosophical anthology called *Protrepticus*,

- three mathematical treatises, and an essay in defence of magic usually called *De mysteriis*.
- Iasus: son of Triopas and his successor as king of the Argives; also called Crotopus in the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome.
- Icarus: see Daedalus.
- Inachus: the first king of the Argives, ruling (according to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome) at the time of Jacob and Esau; father of Isis.
- Innocentia: a religious woman of Carthage, miraculously healed of cancer of the breast and rebuked by Augustine for not making her cure known (see XXII,8).
- Innocentius: a Roman civil servant at Carthage; a Christian, he befriended Augustine and Alypius shortly after their conversion. After a harrowing course of surgery and treatment, he was miraculously healed of a rectal fistula.
- Ino: daughter of Cadmus and Harmonia; sister of Semele; wife of Athamas, king of Thebes. Fleeing from Athamas, who had gone mad, she flung herself into the sea with her son Melicertes, whereupon they were both transformed into sea deities, called Leucothea and Palaemon respectively. The Latin names of these deities are Matuta and Portunus.
- Intercidona: see Silvanus.
- Io or Ion: daughter of Inachus, king of Argos. She was loved by Jupiter and changed, through fear of Juno, into a cow. She is synonymous with the Egyptian Isis.
- Iphigenia: daughter of Agamemnon. Because her father had killed a deer belonging to Diana, Iphigenia was to be offered in expiation. As she was about to be sacrificed, she was borne away by Diana in a cloud and a stag substituted for her. See Euripides, *Iphig. in Taur.*, 26ff; *Iphig. in Aul.*, 1578ff.
- Irenaeus: a civil servant of Hippo whose son was raised from the dead by the miraculous agency of St Stephen.
- Isis: Egyptian goddess; daughter of Inachus; wife of Osiris. See Io.
- Iterduca: see Domiducus.
- Janus: one of the oldest of the Roman gods; associated with beginnings. Possibly he is a deified human founder of a pre-Roman settlement on the Janiculum. He is customarily depicted with two, sometimes four, faces. He welcomed Saturn when the latter was expelled from Olympus. While Janus ruled on the Janiculum, Saturn presided over a settlement called Saturnia which he had founded on the Capitol. Between them, they brought the arts of civilisation to the first natives of Latium. The doors of the temple of Janus were customarily left open in time of war.

- Jerome: Father of the Church; a contemporary (345–420) of Augustine; editor and translator of the Vulgate; translator and continuator of the *Chronicon* of Eusebius of Caesarea, upon which Augustine relies for much of his historical information.
- John: the John whom Augustine mentions at v,26 is St John of Egypt (ca. 300–394). Originally a carpenter, he entered a monastery between the ages of twenty-five and thirty and eventually became a hermit. For the legend of his having foretold the victories of Theodosius I over Maximus and Eugenius, see Palladius of Helenopolis, *Historica lausiaca*, ed. A. J. Festugière (Brussels, 1961).
- Jovian: Flavius Jovianus; chosen by the army to succeed Julian ‘the Apostate’ after the latter’s death in AD 363. Dire military straits immediately forced him to make an unpopular and territorially expensive peace with the Persians. This is the ‘desperate plight’ to which Augustine refers at iv,29.
- Jugatinus: Augustine mentions two gods of this name, one being a god of mountain terraces (iv,8) and the other of the matrimonial union (iv,11; vi,9).
- Julian: Flavius Claudius Julianus; Roman statesman and man of letters; emperor from AD 361 to 363. Known (from the Christian point of view) as ‘the Apostate’ and regarded as a persecutor because of his renunciation of Christianity and attempts to restore the pagan cult.
- Julius Proculus: the Alban noble to whom Romulus appeared after death, indicating that he wished to be honoured under the name of Quirinus and to have a shrine on the Quirinal. The story, to which Augustine alludes at iii,15, comes from Livy, 1,16; cf. Lactantius, *Div. inst.*, 1,15.
- Juno: an early Italian goddess originally associated with women and childbirth and later identified with Hera; sometimes associated with the moon. The female counterpart of Jupiter and the mother of Mars.
- Jupiter: identified with the Greek Zeus, the Father of the Gods: husband of Juno; wielder of thunderbolts; associated with war, treaties, and oaths of all kinds. The Etruscan kings of Rome introduced the worship of Jupiter to Rome, and the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus – ‘Jupiter the Best and Greatest’ – on the Capitol was the centre of the Roman state religion. Augustine also mentions many epithets of Jupiter (e.g. at vii,11): Victor (‘Conqueror’); Invictus (‘Unconquered’); Opitulus (‘Helper’); Impulsor (‘Driver’); Stator (‘Stayer’); Centumpeda (‘Establisher’); Supinalis (‘Overthrower’); Tigillus (‘Supporter’); Almus (‘Bountiful’); Ruminus (‘Nourisher’).

- Jupiter was worshipped in Egypt under the form of a ram, and there called Jupiter Ammon.
- Justinus: Marcus Junianus Justinus; Roman historian who lived during the latter half of the second century AD. His *Epitoma historiarum philippicarum* is an abridgment, although not a very concise one, of Trogus Pompeius's *Historiae philippicae*.
- Juventas: Roman goddess of youth, identified with the Greek Hebe; especially the protectress of young persons at the time when they ceased to be children and began to wear adult clothes. The forms 'Juventus' and 'Juventa' also occur.
- Kronos; Cronus: Greek God later identified with Saturn; son of Uranus. Augustine's identification of Kronos with time at VII,19 is not strictly speaking correct (time is *chronos* in Greek, not *kronos*); but the mistake – if it is a mistake rather than a play on words – is not uncommon.
- Labeo: the Labeo to whom Augustine refers at II,11 and elsewhere is probably Cornelius Labeo, whose writings have not survived, but of whom we know from many citations in Macrobius as well as those in Augustine. He was apparently a Neoplatonist with an encyclopaedic knowledge of Roman religious ritual and tradition.
- Lactantius: Christian apologist and acclaimed Latin stylist, surnamed Firmianus (ca. 250–320); known especially for his *De mortibus persecutorum* and *Divinae institutiones*.
- Lacturnus: perhaps the same as the god Lactans apparently mentioned by Varro (Servius on Virgil, *Georg.*, 1,315) as promoting the growth of young crops.
- Laelius: Gaius Laelius (b. 186 BC); Roman soldier and orator; consul in 140 BC. An interlocutor in Cicero's *De republica* and *De senectute*, and the principal character in his *De amicitia*. Noted for his great learning.
- Lampares: according to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome, he was the twenty-second king of the Assyrians, not the twenty-third, as Augustine says at XVIII,15.
- Laomedon: one of the first kings of Troy; the son of Ilus and Eurydice and the father of Priam. He enlisted the aid of Apollo and Poseidon in building the walls of Troy; but he refused to pay them the agreed sum, thereby bringing disaster to his country.
- Larentina: Roman benefactress; more usually known as Larentia or Acca Larentia (although she is not the Acca Larentia who, with her husband Faustulus, adopted the infants Romulus and Remus). The story which Augustine tells at VI,7 was supposed to have happened

- during the reign of Romulus or possibly of Ancus Marcius. See also Tarutius.
- Lares: spirits of the dead, worshipped at crossroads and as guardian deities of the home (*lares familiares*); they are also associated with the protection of farm land.
- Larvae: see Lemures.
- Latinus: the son and successor of Faunus, whose reign (according to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome) coincided with the fall of Troy. The Latins take their name from him.
- Latona: synonymous with Leto, the mother of Apollo and Diana, to whom she gave birth on the floating Island of Delos.
- Lavinia: see Silvius.
- Lemures; also called Larvae: hungry ghosts who haunt houses on the days called *lemuria* (9, 11, 13 May) and who can only be persuaded to go away by feeding them with beans in a special ceremony (see Ovid, *Fast.*, 5,419ff).
- Leo: see Alexander the Great.
- Lepidus: Marcus Aemilius Lepidus; consul 78 BC; attempted a military occupation of Rome in 77 BC, intending to overthrow Sulla's constitution. He was defeated in battle near the Janiculum by the forces of the other consul, Quintus Lutatius Catulus, the leader of the senatorial nobility.
- Leucippus: the eighth king of the Sicyonians. According to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome, he ruled at the time of Isaac.
- Leucothea or Matuta: see Ino.
- Levana: it was a Roman custom to lay a newly born infant on the floor, and for the father to recognise it as his own by picking it up. Levana is apparently the goddess who presides over this ceremony.
- Liber: an Italian god of vegetation subsequently identified with the Greek Dionysus or Bacchus, and hence a god of wine. Augustine (apparently following Varro) also attributes to him responsibility for male seed or sexual potency/fertility; but the explanation which Augustine gives of the name Liber at VI,9 is unknown elsewhere. Liber has a female counterpart called Libera.
- Libera: see Liber.
- Libya: see Busiris.
- Linus: son of Apollo and Terpsichore and supposedly the inventor of song; teacher of Orpheus and Hercules. He rebuked Hercules for not practising and Hercules struck him with his lyre and killed him. Linus may have been a real pre-Homeric poet (as Augustine supposes at XVIII,14); but there is no record of any poems being attributed to him in antiquity.

- Livy: Titus Livius (59 BC to AD 17); Roman historian and author of a comprehensive history of Rome 'from the foundation of the City' (*ab urbe condita*) down to his own day. Of its 142 books, only thirty-five and a few fragments remain; but we have summaries or epitomes, called *periocliae*, of all except Bks 136 and 137.
- Lubentina: Roman goddess personifying sensual, and perhaps specifically sexual, pleasure. Cicero speaks of Lubentina Venus (*De nat. deor.*, 2,23,61).
- Lucan: Marcus Annaeus Lucanus (AD 39-65); Roman poet, author of the epic poem in ten books called *Pharsalia* on the Civil War between Caesar and Pompey. Forced to commit suicide after becoming involved in the conspiracy of Piso against Nero.
- Lucina: see Mena.
- Lucius Opimius: Roman aristocrat and soldier; and one of the leaders of the reactionary opposition to Gaius Gracchus. When consul in 121 BC, he proceeded mercilessly against Gracchus by means of the *senatus consultum ultimum* and a subsequent *quaestio* which is said to have condemned three thousand individuals. He then dedicated the restored temple of Concord. He was prosecuted in 120 BC for putting Roman citizens to death without trial, but acquitted (Cicero, *De. orat.*, 2,25,106).
- Lucius Pontius: see Lucius Titus.
- Lucius Quintus: Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus; proverbial as an example of old-fashioned Roman virtue, thanks to the famous story (Livy, 3) of his dictatorship in 458 (see *City of God*, v,18). Livy also tells (4,13ff) of a second dictatorship in 439 BC, when Cincinnatus would have been eighty; but not all authorities regard this second dictatorship as historical. See also Quintus Servilius.
- Lucius Saturninus: Lucius Appuleius Saturninus; violent Roman demagogue and political assassin; supporter of Marius; tribune in 103 and 100 BC.
- Lucius Titus and Lucius Pontius: nothing is known of these two people mentioned in connection with Sulla at II,24 beyond what Augustine says there. See Plutarch, *Sulla*, 27 and Obsequens, *Liber prodig.*, 116.
- Lucius Valerius: see Publius Valerius.
- Lucretia: wife of Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus, who stabbed herself after she was raped by Tarquinius Sextus, son of Tarquinius Superbus. This led to the rising of Junius Brutus and the expulsion of the kings.
- Lucretius: Spurius Lucretius Tricipitinus, father of Lucretia; he was elected consul for 509, but died within a few days.
- Lucullus: (1) Lucius Licinius Lucullus; Roman patrician and soldier; consul in 74 BC; noted for his great wealth and opulence, and for his

- military campaign against Mithridates. Founder of the cult of Felicity. (2) The bishop called Lucullus mentioned at XXII,8 is not known from any other source. Involved in the translation of the relics of Stephen the proto-martyr to Africa, he was miraculously healed of a fistula. The story, as Augustine briefly alludes to it, looks suspiciously similar to that of Innocentius (q.v.) in the same chapter.
- Luna: originally a Sabine moon-goddess whose worship was thought to have been introduced to Rome by Titus Tatius (Varro, *De ling. Lat.*, 5,74). She had temples on the Aventine and the Palatine.
- Lux: Roman deity personifying light; but, contrary to what Augustine seems to think at IV,23, Lux is not mentioned in the list given by Varro (*De ling. Lat.*, 5,74) of gods introduced to Rome by Titus Tatius.
- Lycaeus: Augustine speaks at XVIII,17 of 'the god Lycaeus'; but no such god is mentioned in any other extant source (Augustine's information comes from Varro). Jupiter and Pan were worshipped on Mount Lycaeus in Arcadia where, as Augustine notes, they were called Jupiter Lycaeus and Pan Lycaeus; but the supposed association of Lycaeus with *lykos*, wolf, is probably false. Cf. Herodotus 4,203; Virgil, *Aen.*, 8,344..
- Lycurgus: the traditional, but almost certainly mythical, founder of the constitution of Sparta; said to have been inspired by the oracle at Delphi, and worshipped in Sparta as a god. Not to be confused with the distinguished Attic orator of the same name (fl. 330 BC).
- Lymphs; Lymphae: water nymphs; semi-divine beings particularly associated with springs.
- Maia: daughter of Atlas and Pleione and the mother of Hermes/Mercury by Jupiter.
- Mallius Theodorus: consul in AD 399, with Eutropius as his colleague. The Theodorus to whom Augustine's *De beata vita* is dedicated may be the same person. Cf. *Retract.*, 1,2.
- Mamythos: the twelfth king of the Assyrians, reigning (according to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome) at the time of Joseph's death.
- Mancinus: Gaius Hostilius Mancinus. When consul in 137, he was defeated by the Numantians and made peace. The Senate refused to accept the peace and (with his consent) Mancinus was handed over to the enemy bound and naked. The enemy refused to accept him, and he subsequently resumed his political career, though not without many difficulties.
- Manturna: Roman goddess known only from Augustine's mention of her at VI,9; she seems to ensure the new bride's fidelity to her husband.

- Marathus: king of the Sicyonians. According to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome, he ruled at the time of the Exodus from Egypt.
- Marcellinus: a close friend of St Augustine (at Bk 1,1 he is called *fili carissime*, 'most beloved son'). He was sent by the emperor Honorius to preside over the Council held at Carthage in 411 to resolve the Donatist dispute. His correspondence with St Augustine led eventually to the writing of the *City of God*. See Introduction, pp. xii–xiii.
- Marcus Camillus: Marcus Furius Camillus; saviour of Rome after the Gallic invasion of 387–386 BC; military tribune with consular power in 401, 398, 394, 386, 384 and 381 BC. His greatest exploit was the capture of Etruscan city of Veii in *ca.* 396. Accused of having misappropriated some of the booty from Veii, he went into voluntary exile.
- Marcus Drusus: Marcus Livius Drusus; Roman orator, agitator and agrarian reformer; tribune in 91 BC. His turbulent political career ended in assassination. The failure of his proposals and his murder led to the Social War of 90–89 BC.
- Marcus Fulvius: Marcus Fulvius Flaccus; consul in 125 BC; a friend and political associate of the Gracchi.
- Marcus Horatius: Marcus Horatius Pulvillus, said to have played a distinguished part in the bringing about the expulsion of the Tarquins. According to Livy (2,8), he was chosen consul for 509, after the premature death of Spurius Lucretius Tricipitinus.
- Marcus Marcellus: Marcus Claudius Marcellus; Roman general of the third century BC. He won great renown in the campaign against the Gauls of 222, and captured Syracuse in 212 after a long siege. He was killed in 208 BC. The story told at *City of God*, 1,6 of his weeping over Syracuse comes from Livy, 25,24,11.
- Marcus Pulvillus: Marcus Horatius Pulvillus; consul in 509 BC and, according to some authorities, again in 507, with P. Valerius Publicola. He was chosen by lot instead of Publicola to dedicate the temple of Jupiter on the Capitol. Out of family jealousy, Publicola's brother Marcus Valerius tried to disrupt the ceremony by falsely announcing the death of Pulvillus's son. See Plutarch, *Publicola*, 14; Livy, 2,8.
- Marica: a nymph of Minturnae in Latium, where there was a wood dedicated to her. Variouslly identified with Venus, Diana or Circe.
- Marius: Gaius Marius (157–86 BC). Self-made Roman general who established his reputation by defeating the African king Jugurtha and the Celtic tribes threatening northern Italy. He reorganised the Roman army and was active in the Social War against the allied Italian peoples. He was consul in 107, every year between 104 and 100, and in 86 for an unprecedented seventh time. He allied himself

- with the extreme democrats in Rome, thus becoming the rival of the dictator Sulla. There ensued (88–82 BC) the first of the Civil Wars between military leaders which ended in the collapse of the Republic. Sulla forced Marius to leave Rome in 88, but he returned triumphant in 87 and slaughtered his opponents with such fury and brutality that his sanity was questioned. His son, mentioned by Augustine at III,28, was born in 110 BC, shared his father's flight and return, and was consul in 82. Plutarch's life of Marius includes the story of his hiding in the Minturnian marshes mentioned by Augustine at II,23.
- Mars: Roman god, son of Juno/Hera and the father of Romulus. Originally regarded as a spirit of vegetation, but primarily associated in the religion of the State with war. Called Ares in Greek.
- Martialis: an aged pagan of Hippo converted to Christianity on his deathbed through the miraculous agency of St Stephen.
- Matuta: Roman goddess of the dawn or morning, to whom Augustine (IV,8) attributes the function of presiding over crops when ripe. See Ino.
- Maximian: Marcus Aurelius Valerius Maximianus, Roman emperor jointly with Diocletian from 286 until they both abdicated in 305. He rigorously enforced Diocletian's edicts of persecution in Italy, Africa and Spain. His abdication in 305 was insincere and he spent the rest of his life in intrigues and various attempts to reinstate himself. He committed suicide in 310.
- Maximinus: (1) Gaius Julius Verus Maximinus, Roman emperor from 235 to 238; a persecutor of the Church, noted for his cruelty and ruthlessness. He was a Thracian peasant (hence the frequent epithet 'Thrax') whose military career owed much to his extraordinary physical strength and presence. (2) Bishop of Sinita in North Africa; a contemporary and colleague of Augustine.
- Maximus: Magnus Maximus, Roman emperor 383–388; commanded Roman troops in Britain; elevated by the army in Britain, he marched to Gaul and overthrew the emperor Gratian. Theodosius I initially recognised him, but subsequently defeated him after his invasion of Italy and expulsion of Valentinian II.
- Melanthus: the sixteenth king of the Athenians. According to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome, his rule coincided with that of Silvius over the Latins and the judgeship of Eli the priest over Israel.
- Melantomice: wife of King Criasus of the Argives.
- Melicertes: see Ino.
- Mellona: called Mellonia by Arnobius (*Adv. gent.*, 4,7); a deity associated with the production of honey.

- Mena and Lucina: these are usually simply alternative names of Luna (Cicero., *De nat. deor.*, 2,27,68). But Augustine lists them as separate deities, presiding over menstruation and childbirth respectively.
- Menelaus: king of Sparta, husband of Helen, whom Paris carried off to Troy, thus bringing about the expedition of the Greek chieftains to recover her. A somewhat ineffectual figure in the *Iliad*, rather overshadowed by his brother Agamemnon.
- Mens: Roman goddess personifying mental or moral balance, sanity, reasonableness. According to Livy (22,10; 23,31), a temple was consecrated to Mens after the battle of Lake Trasimene in 217 BC (cf. Ovid, *Fast.*, 6,241f).
- Mercury; Mercurius: Roman god identified with the Greek Hermes; protector of merchants in particular and travellers in general. The messenger of Jupiter and sometimes (as in Plautus's *Amphitruon*) his confederate in amorous escapades. Also presides over human speech.
- Merula: Lucius Cornelius Merula; committed suicide in the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in 87 BC, to avoid falling into the hands of Marius and Cinna.
- Messapus or Cephissus: the ninth king of Sicyon, reigning (according to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome) at the time of Isaac's death.
- Metellus: Lucius Caecilius Metellus (d. 221 BC); Pontifex Maximus in 241. When the temple of Vesta caught fire, he was gravely injured while rescuing the Palladium from the flames. (The Palladium was an ancient image of Athene said to have been sent from heaven by Zeus and brought from Troy by Aeneas. It was believed that the protection of the city depended upon its safety.)
- Minerva: the Roman goddess of wisdom and the arts; identified with the Greek Athene, and hence also a goddess of war. Also called Tritonia, from her birth in or from Lake Tritonis in Libya (Herodotus, 4,178).
- Minos: see Europa.
- Mithridates: Mithridates VI Eupator Dionysius, king of Pontus (120–63 BC). His military conquests in Asia Minor and Greece made him a serious threat to Rome, and the Romans fought three wars against him before he was finally defeated by Pompey.
- Mnestheus: said in the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome to have been king of the Argives at the time of the destruction of Troy and the flight of Aeneas to Italy. The Mnestheus mentioned by Virgil (*Aen.* 5,117, etc.) is presumably the same person.
- Modesty; Pudicitia: a Roman goddess personifying the modesty or chastity of women. Livy mentions her shrine in the Forum Boarium (10,23).

- Mucius Scaevola: (1) The Mucius Scaevola who appears in III,28ff and IV,27 is Quintus Mucius Scaevola, eminent jurist and orator and author of the first systematic treatise of civil law. An opponent of Marius, he lost his life in the massacres of 87 BC. (2) The Mucius of whom Augustine speaks at IV,20 and V,18 is Gaius Mucius Scaevola, a hero of the war with Lars Porsenna after the expulsion of the kings. The celebrated story of how he burnt off his own right hand (Scaevola means 'left-handed') is at Livy, 2,12.
- Murcia: a goddess of this name had a temple beneath the Aventine hill (Livy, 1,33); but Murcia in this sense may be simply a synonym for Venus (see J. E. C. Welldon, *De Civitate Dei*, I, p. 171, n. 2). Augustine speaks of Murcia (IV,16) as a goddess associated with sloth or indolence, as does Arnobius (*Adv. gent.*, 4,9).
- Musaeus: semi-mythical Greek poet and musician, supposedly a contemporary and pupil of Orpheus (some sources call him a son of Orpheus). A collection of oracles was ascribed to him in classical times. He is particularly associated with the rites of Demeter at Eleusis: see Diodorus Siculus, 4,25.
- Mutunus: see Priapus.
- Naenia: a goddess associated with the dead, or with rites for the dead; mentioned also by Arnobius (*Adv. gent.*, 4,7). Naeniae or Neniae were funeral poems sung by the female relatives of the deceased.
- Naevius: Gnaeus Naevius (ca. 270–199 BC); Roman dramatist and poet. According to Aulus Gellius (*Noct. Att.*, 3,3), he was imprisoned for his outspoken criticism of public figures.
- Neptune: Italian god of water, later assimilated to the Greek sea-god Poseidon. In Roman tradition, Neptune was said to have a companion spirit, whose name is sometimes given as Salacia and sometimes as Venilia. Augustine regards these two as separate (VII,22). The Venilia whom Augustine associates, at IV,11, with the coming of hope may be the Italian nymph variously said to be the wife of Faunus or Janus (see Virgil, *Aen.*, 10,76; Ovid, *Met.*, 14,334).
- Nero Caesar: Nero Claudius Caesar, Roman emperor from 54 to 68; his principate became a byword for extravagance, vanity and cruelty. He is said to have arranged the death of his own mother in 59, and to have been responsible for the fire that devastated Rome in 64. After the unsuccessful conspiracy of Gaius Calpurnius Piso in 65, many prominent Romans were put to death or instructed to commit suicide, including Seneca and Lucan. Much of what we know of him is from hostile sources, however. His bad press is at least partly due to his persecution of the Christians in 65.
- Nigidius: Publius Nigidius Figulus; Pythagorean philosopher, astrologer and scholar; a friend of Cicero and a contemporary of Varro. He

- wrote on grammar, theology and the sciences. He was held in the highest esteem by his contemporaries, but only fragments of his works remain. A supporter of Pompey, he died in exile in 45 BC.
- Ninus: (1) legendary eponymous founder of the Assyrian city of Nineveh; traditionally supposed to have invented the art of warfare and to have been the first to assemble large armies. Augustine remarks several times (IV,6; XVI,10,17; XVIII,2) on his empire and its magnificence. (2) Son of the above and Queen Semiramis. Also known as Ninyas.
- Nodotus: a god of corn, presiding over the nodes or joints of the stem; this name is unknown apart from Augustine's references to it.
- Numa Pompilius: the semi-mythical second king of Rome (traditionally 715–673 BC); founder of the Roman religious system and the calendar. The story told by Augustine at VII,34 of the recovery of Numa's religious books by 'a certain Terentius' is at Livy, 40,29; cf. Plutarch, *Numa*, 22.
- Numeria: a Roman goddess supposed to preside over the speedy birth of infants and the teaching of children to count.
- Numitor: sixteenth king of Alba Longa, deposed by his brother Amulius; father of Rhea Silvia, and hence grandfather of Romulus and Remus.
- Numitorius: Gaius Numitorius; Roman aristocrat and supporter of Sulla, put to death during the Marian persecutions of 87 BC. Said to have been disembowelled with hooks.
- Octavius: Gnaeus Octavius; supporter of Sulla and consul in 87 BC; one of the first victims of the Marian persecutions of that year.
- Oedipus: a king of Thebes, son of Laius and Jocasta. He unknowingly killed his father and married his mother. The discovery drove him mad and he put out his own eyes. A temple was later dedicated to him at Athens. As Augustine mentions at XVIII,13, he solved the riddle of the Sphinx.
- Ogygus: mythical founder and ruler of Thebes (his name is more usually spelt Ogyges); a great flood is said to have occurred in his day (ca. 1800 BC) when the waters of Lake Copais rose and inundated the whole valley of Boeotia.
- Olympias: see Alexander the Great.
- Oneus: the twenty-ninth king of the Assyrians; his reign apparently coincided with that of Silvius over the Latins and the rule of Eli the priest over Israel. In the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome, his name is given as Thomaeus.
- Ops: Roman goddess of plenty, riches and power, and the patroness of husbandry; wife of Saturn; variously identified with Tellus, Cybele and Proserpine.

Orcus: synonymous with Pluto.

Origen: Origenes Adamantius (ca. AD 185–255); Alexandrian Christian and Neoplatonist philosopher. He exerted considerable influence on the development of Christian doctrine; but, as Augustine notes at xi,23, his Platonism led him into heterodoxy in certain important respects. He was tortured during the persecution under the emperor Decius.

Orpheus: semi-mythical Greek musician; husband of Eurydice, whom he tried unsuccessfully to rescue from Hades after her death. The Orphic poetry to which Augustine refers at xviii,14 is often mentioned by Plato (see *Rep.*, 364E; *Philebus*, 66C; *Cratylus*, 402B). Orpheus was sometimes said to have shared with Dionysus the founding of the Eleusinian mysteries. Some authors also make him the ancestor of Homer and Hesiod.

Orthopolis: the twelfth king of the Sicyonians, ruling (according to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome) at the time of the birth of Moses.

Osiris: Egyptian god typifying the principle of good, slain and dismembered by his brother Set or Tryphon, who typifies the principle of evil. Osiris is also regarded as the god of the dead, and as representing the male productive principle in nature. He was identified by the Greeks with Dionysus.

Pallas: a son of Hercules who died in youth and after whom the Palatine was said to have been named. See Dionysius of Halicarnassus, i,32,1. Possibly the Pallas introduced by Virgil into the *Aeneid* (10,457ff) is the same person.

Panthus: a Trojan elder (*Il.*, 3,146), son of Othrys; portrayed by Virgil (*Aen.* 2,318ff) as a priest of Apollo killed during the sack of Troy.

Paris: one of the fifty sons of Priam, known in Homer by the epithet Alexandros. Held to be responsible for the Trojan War because of his abduction of Helen, wife of Menelaus. See also Discord.

Patelana: Roman goddess who presides over the opening of the ears of corn. She is also mentioned by Arnobius (*Adv. gent.*, 4,7).

Paulinus of Nola: Meropius Pontius Paulinus (353–431), bishop of Nola from 409 to 431 and a friend of St Augustine. He came of a wealthy and powerful family; but he and his wife gave away all they had and became ascetics after the death of their only son eight days after his birth. He was ordained priest in 395.

Paulus and Palladia: a brother and sister healed of a mysterious sickness in the Cathedral at Hippo. The two miracles were apparently spectacular and public (see xxii,8); but no record of them survives apart from the account given by Augustine.

Paventia: the goddess who protects children from sudden frights. Tertullian calls her Paventina (*Ad nat.*, 2,11).

- Pecunia: Roman goddess personifying money; according to Juvenal (1,113ff), she had no temple.
- Pegasus: see Gorgon; Bellerophon.
- Pelagus: successor of Polyphides as king of the Sicyonians; his reign coincided with that Aeneas and with the judgeship of Samson over Israel.
- Peleus: see Discord; Achilles.
- Pellonia: a Roman goddess invoked to put the enemy to flight. Mentioned also by Arnobius (*Adv. gent.*, 4,4).
- Periander of Corinth: see Seven Sages.
- Pericles: Athenian general, orator and statesman (500–429 BC), who controlled affairs in Athens between 460 BC and his death. His political aim was to create a democracy embodying an equilibrium between the interests of the state and of individual citizens. He was largely responsible for the construction of the magnificent buildings on the Acropolis. He was satirised by Aristophanes and the comic poet Cratylus.
- Perseus: (1) king of Macedon, 179–168 BC; defeated by Aemilius Paullus at the battle of Pydna, 168 BC. (2) Greek hero, son of Jupiter and Danae, adopted by Polydectes, king of Seriphus; slayer of Medusa. On his way back from this feat, he used Medusa's head to turn to stone the sea monster to which Andromeda, daughter of Cepheus, was about to be sacrificed. He married Andromeda, and their son Perses became the father of the Persian race.
- Persius: Aulus Persius Flaccus (AD 34–62); Roman satirist and Stoic. His literary output is small, and he is said to have found composition slow and difficult. His extant works consist of six short satires, extending in all to 650 hexameter lines.
- Pertunda: Roman matrimonial goddess; one of the deities who watches over the marriage-bed. Her name is derived from *pertundere*, to penetrate or pierce: she is evidently one of the goddesses presiding over the loss of virginity. She is also mentioned several times by Arnobius (e.g., *Adv. gent.*, 3,10; 4,7).
- Petronia: a prominent Christian of Uzali miraculously healed of a serious and protracted illness (see xxii,8).
- Phegous: younger brother of Phoroneus and co-ruler with him. Divine honours were accorded to him after his death because he had established shrines for the worship of the gods and taught his subjects to measure time. But Augustine is our only authority for this (xviii,3). He probably got his information from Varro.
- Philip: Philip II of Macedon (ca. 382–336 BC), father of Alexander the Great. He showed great political and military prowess in developing

his kingdom, building a powerful army and extending his control into central Greece. He has been rather unjustly overshadowed by the achievements of his son, who was possibly instrumental in his assassination in 336 BC. See also Aeschines and Aristodemus.

Philus: Lucius Fabius Philus, one of the interlocutors in Cicero's dialogue *De republica*; a member of the literary circle associated with Scipio Africanus Minor.

Phoebus: epithet of Apollo.

Phoenix: a Greek prince and tutor of Achilles. He was an old man at the time of the Trojan War. See *Il.*, 9,432ff.

Phorbas: son of Criasus and Melantomice and the successor of Criasus as king of the Argives.

Phoroneus: son of Inachus; second king of Argos, jointly with his brother Phegous; said by Pausanias (2,19,5) to have invented fire.

Photinus: bishop of Sirmium deposed in 351 for professing the heresy, named after him, which denies the divinity of Christ. Photinianism, which is somewhat similar to Sabellianism, was formally condemned at the Council of Constantinople, 381.

Phryxus: to escape the hostility of their stepmother Ino, Phryxus and his sister Helle fled to Colchis on the back of a ram with a golden fleece. Helle fell into the Hellespont, named after her, and perished. Phryxus sacrificed the ram and hung its fleece up in the grove of Ares. It was later brought back to Greece by Jason and the Argonauts.

Picus: an Italian agriculture-god and the mythical first king of the Laurentines. He is sometimes described as a son of Saturn and sometimes (as at XVIII,15) as the son of Sterces or Stercutius, the discoverer of the agricultural benefits of manure. He possessed prophetic powers. Said to have been turned into a woodpecker by Circe when he rejected her amorous advances (Virgil, *Aen.*, 7,189; Ovid, *Met.*, 14,320).

Pilumnus: see Silvanus.

Pittacus of Mitylene: see Seven Sages.

Plato: celebrated Athenian philosopher (ca. 429–347 BC); pupil of Socrates and teacher of Aristotle; nearly all of his known works survive. Augustine's knowledge of Plato is largely second-hand, but the *City of God* contains references or allusions to six of his dialogues: *Symposium*, *Cratylus*, *Republic*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus* and *Timaeus*.

Plautus: Titus Maccius Plautus (254–184 BC); Roman comic dramatist. Only twenty of his 130 plays are extant.

Plemmeus: the eleventh king of the Sicyonians, ruling (according to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome) at the time of Joseph's death.

- Pliny: Gaius Plinius Secundus (AD 23–79), called ‘the elder’ to distinguish him from his nephew G. Plinius Caecilius Secundus. The elder Pliny was a prodigious author, but only his *Naturalis Historia*, in thirty-seven books, survives: a work in which he claims to have recorded twenty thousand notable facts. His liking for notable facts proved fatal when, having gone ashore at Stabiae in 79 to observe the eruption of Vesuvius (the eruption which destroyed Pompeii), he inhaled some poisonous volcanic fumes and died.
- Plotinus: Neoplatonist philosopher (ca. AD 205–270); the chief exponent of Platonism during the third century AD; he taught in Rome from the age of forty to the end of his life. His teachings were edited and published after his death by his pupil Porphyry, in six *Enneads* or groups of nine subjects.
- Pluto: the Greek god of the underworld, also called Hades, later assimilated to the Latin deity Dis Pater. Both Pluto and Dis Pater were originally gods of the fields.
- Polemo: Academic philosopher (d. 270 BC). He and a crowd of hooligans burst into the lecture room where Xenocrates was lecturing on temperance. He was so impressed by Xenocrates that he at once became a convert to philosophy, and eventually succeeded Xenocrates as head of the Academy. His teaching was almost entirely ethical (see Cicero, *Acad. prior.*, 2,42,131).
- Polyphides: king of the Sicyonians at the time of the destruction of Troy and the flight of Aeneas to Italy.
- Pomona: Roman nymph of fruit; the wife of Picus; she had a sacred wood on the road from Rome to Ostia.
- Pompey: Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus (106–48 BC); Roman general who first distinguished himself fighting against Marius on the side of Sulla. He then put down a slave rebellion, rid the Mediterranean of pirates, and brought the war with Mithridates to an end. In 67 BC he intervened in the civil war in Palestine between Aristobulus and Hyrcanus, the sons of Alexander Janneus. Augustine refers to this famous episode at xviii,45. He married Julia, daughter of Julius Caesar, and was a member of the first Triumvirate, with Caesar and Crassus. During Caesar’s absence in Gaul he ruled Rome as sole consul. After Julia’s death, increasing tension between him and Caesar culminated in an open breach in 49 (see *City of God*, iii,13; 30). Pompey led the aristocratic and conservative party, and was reluctantly followed in his policy by Cicero. After Pompey had taken his army to Greece and was defeated by Caesar at the battle of Pharsalus, Cicero supported Caesar. Pompey escaped to Egypt, but was assassinated on landing.

Pompilius: see Numa Pompilius.

Pomponius: Lucius Pomponius (fl. ca. AD 90); author of *fabulae Atellanae*, a stylised form of comedy which flourished in the first century AD, not entirely unlike the *commedia dell'arte* in character.

Populonia: a Roman goddess, according to Augustine (at VI,10); but the name is more usually an epithet of Juno as the protectress of property against storms. (Cf. Macrobius, *Saturn.*, 3,11; Arnobius, *Adv. gent.*, 3,30.)

Porphyry: Neoplatonist philosopher (ca. 232–304 BC); a pupil of Plotinus and a determined opponent of Christianity: said to have been a lapsed Christian himself (Nicephorus Callistus, *Ecccl. hist.*, 10,36). Augustine invariably shows him considerable respect. He wrote a treatise against the Christians in fifteen books which survives only in fragments. His *De regressu animae* is known to us only from quotations in Augustine. His Letter to Anebo the Egyptian, to which Augustine refers at X,11, is extant.

Porsenna: Lars Porsenna, traditionally king of the Etruscan town of Clusium, who came to the aid of the exiled Tarquinius Superbus. According to the version given in Livy (2,9ff), the attempted restoration of Tarquin was unsuccessful largely thanks to the heroic feats of Horatius Cocles and G. Mucius Scaevola.

Posidonius: Greek historian, astrologer and philosopher (d. ca. 50 BC); head of the Stoic school at Rhodes (Cicero studied under him there). He was an influential figure in the development of Stoicism, but only a few fragments of his writings survive.

Possidius: bishop of Calama, near Hippo. He was a member of Augustine's religious community at Hippo until, in 397, he was made bishop of Calama on Augustine's recommendation. He remained in close touch with Augustine until the latter's death, and wrote a useful biography of him (see Bibliographical Note).

Postumius: we know nothing of Postumius the diviner beyond what Augustine records at II,24. Both Cicero (*De divin.*, 1,33,72) and Plutarch (*Sulla*, 9) tell the story, but they assign it to different occasions in Sulla's career.

Potina and Educa: the goddesses who oversee the weaned infant's first attempts to drink and eat respectively.

Praejectus: a bishop involved in the translation of the relics of St Stephen to Africa. He was instrumental in the miraculous cure of a blind woman.

Praestantius: a man whose father, under the influence of some drug, dreamed that he was turned into a horse. The story occurs only at XVIII,18.

- Prema:** Roman matrimonial goddess; one of the deities presiding over the marriage bed. She is also mentioned by Tertullian, *Ad nat.*, 2,11.
- Priam:** king of Troy at the time of its destruction, slain in the sack of the city. Homer portrays him as a sympathetic and tragic figure. He became proverbial as a man who had suffered great reversals of fortune.
- Priapus:** god of fertility; in particular the god who presides over orchards and vineyards. Characteristically represented with a red face and an erect penis, he is something of a figure of fun; but Augustine several times refers with distaste to the practices associated with his worship. Also called Mutunus, Tutunus, Mutunus Tutunus, or Mutinus.
- Procus or Procas:** successor of Aventinus as king of Alba Longa. He reigned for twenty-three years; father of Numitor and Amulius.
- Prometheus:** son of Jupiter and Clymene; brother of Atlas and Epimetheus and father of Deucalion. He was fastened to a rock as a punishment for stealing fire from heaven, and his entrails were daily devoured by a vulture (in some versions an eagle) which was eventually slain by Hercules.
- Proserpine:** Roman goddess; daughter of Ceres; associated with the fruits of the earth and especially with germinating corn. Her worship began in Rome in 249 BC, during the first Punic War.
- Protasius and Gervasius:** twin brothers, supposedly martyred during the persecution of the Church under Nero in 65, whose bodies were discovered in Milan 386, their whereabouts having been miraculously revealed to St Ambrose in a dream. Their discovery is said to have been accompanied by many miracles.
- Proteus:** a sea deity, noted especially for his frequent changes of form. He was a servant of Neptune, whose sea calves he tended.
- Ptolemy:** Ptolemy is the name of all the Macedonian kings of Egypt. (1) The Ptolemy mentioned at VIII,11 and XVIII,42 is Ptolemy II Philadelphus (reigned 285–246 BC). For the story of how the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Scriptures was made under his auspices, see *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, II, pp. 435ff, s.v. 'Bible, IV (Texts and Versions), 5'. See also Josephus, *Ant. Jud.*, 12,2,4. (2) Ptolemy 'the son of Lagus' (XVIII,42), called Soter, is the father of Ptolemy Philadelphus. It was he, and not his son, who founded the famous library at Alexandria, although Ptolemy Philadelphus completed it. There is an amusing story about Ptolemy Soter and the Stoic philosopher Sphaerus at Diogenes Laertius, 7,177. (3) Ptolemy 'called Epiphanes' (XVIII,45) is Ptolemy V, who was a child when he succeeded his father in 203 BC: Augustine's historical account in this chapter is very confused.

- Publius Valerius: Publius Valerius Publicola (or Poplicola); successor to the consulship in 509 BC, when Collatinus went into exile. He was also consul in 508, 507 and 504. He died in 503. Augustine mistakenly calls him Lucius Valerius at v,18. The story of his poverty at the time of his death is at Valerius Maximus, 4,4,1.
- Pyrrhus: (1) For the Pyrrhus mentioned at III,13, see Andromache. (2) The Pyrrhus who appears in III,17 is Pyrrhus, king of Epirus (319–272 BC). Asked by the Tarentines to assist them against Rome, he landed at Tarentum at the beginning of 280 BC with twenty-five thousand men and twenty elephants. The ambiguous oracle is discussed and dismissed by Cicero at *De divin.*, 2,56,116.
- Pythagoras: Greek philosopher, mathematician and mystic (fl. ca. 530 BC) of Samos. He later migrated to Croton in Italy and founded a community of ascetics there. His belief that the universe is constructed according to laws of numerical proportion is what Augustine has in mind at VI,5. (The famous theorem about right-angled triangles which is always associated with his name was in fact devised by Euclid.)
- Quiet; Quies: deity personifying tranquillity, sleep, rest. Livy (4,41) speaks of a temple of Quies on the Via Laticana; nothing is known of the temple outside the Colline gate which Augustine mentions at IV,16.
- Quintius Cincinnatus: see Lucius Quintus.
- Quintus Servilius: Augustine speaks of a Quintus Servilius at III,17; but he clearly means Gaius Servilius Ahala, said to have saved Rome from tyranny in 439 BC by assassinating Spurius Maelius. The assertion that he was acting as Master of Horse in the second dictatorship of Cincinnatus is doubtful.
- Quirinus: an ancient Sabine deity worshipped on the Quirinal from very early times (Ovid, *Fast.*, 4,475ff). Little is known of him; but his association with Romulus is a relatively late development (Cicero, *De nat. deor.*, 2,62; *De offic.*, 3,41).
- Radagaisus: a Scythian chieftain, often called king of the Goths, but seemingly the leader of a confederation of Goths, Vandals, Suevi, Burgundians and Alani. He invaded Italy in AD 405 or 406, apparently with an army of two hundred thousand men (Orosius, 7,37). After his defeat by Stilicho, he was (in violation of Stilicho's promise) put to death and his warriors sold into slavery.
- Regulus: Marcus Atilius Regulus; Roman consul (267 and 256 BC), general and hero of the African expedition of 256. The defeated Carthaginians renewed their war effort after Regulus attempted to impose impossibly onerous conditions of peace upon them; and he

was himself defeated in 255. The famous story of his death comes from a number of sources: Livy, 16; Cicero, *De offic.*, 1,13; Horace, *Carm.*, 3,5.

Remus: see Romulus.

Restitutus: the presbyter of this name whose remarkable talent Augustine mentions at XIV,24 is not known from any other source.

Rhadamanthus: see Europa.

Rhea or Rhea Silvia, also called Ilia: the daughter of Numitor and mother of Romulus and Remus.

Robigo: a goddess who protects the growing wheat against blight; the spelling Rubigo also occurs (Ovid, *Fast.*, 4,907ff; Lactantius, *De fals. relig.*, 1,20). Varro mentions a god called Robigus who has the same function (*De re rust.*, 1,1,6).

Romulus: Romulus and his twin brother Remus are the legendary founders of Rome. They were the sons of Mars and the Vestal Rhea Silvia. Thrown into the Tiber by their uncle Amulius, they were washed ashore, suckled by a she-wolf, and eventually found by the shepherd Faustulus. Having slain their uncle, they founded a city on the site of Rome; but, in a quarrel over precedence, Romulus killed Remus and became sole king. Romulus populated Rome by opening an asylum on the Capitol for all fugitives: see *City of God*, 1,34; see also Livy, 1,3,10ff and Plutarch, *Romulus*.

Rumina: a Roman goddess, possibly Etruscan in origin, who presides over the breast and suckling. She had a shrine near the Lupercal, where milk was offered rather than wine. Here too stood the sacred fig-tree under which the she-wolf suckled Romulus and Remus.

Ruminus is also one of the epithets of Jupiter.

Runcina: Roman goddess associated by Augustine (IV,8) with the clearing of weeds from the field, but unknown from any other source.

Rusina: Roman goddess of the countryside, elsewhere called Rurinae and Rucinia (cf. Tertullian, *Ad nat.*, 2,11).

Sabellius: Christian heretic (fl. ca. 220). The heresy which bears his name so emphasises the unity of the Godhead as to deny that the Son has a subsistence or personality distinct from that of the Father.

Salacia: see Neptune.

Sallust: Gaius Sallustius Crispus (86–34 BC); Roman politician and historian. He was the author of a number of historical works, of which only two, *Bellum Catilinae* and *Bellum Jugurthinum*, survive in more than fragmentary form. He is cited over forty times in the *City of God*.

Sancus or Sanctus: the first king of the Sabines, deified after his death: see Lactantius, *Div. inst.*, 1,5. He had a temple on the Quirinal. He

is also called *Dius Fidius* and *Semo*, and is sometimes identified with *Hercules*. regarded as the protector of marriage vow, of the law of nations and of the law of hospitality.

Saphrus: the fourteenth king of the Assyrians, ruling at the time of the birth of Moses. In the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome, he is called *Sphaenis*.

Sardanapalus: the Latin form of the name of the Assyrian king *Assurbani-pal* (668–626 BC).

Sarpedon: see *Europa*.

Saturn: an ancient Italian god later identified with the Greek *Kronos*; the father of *Jupiter*. Said to have come from Greece to Italy when dethroned and expelled from Olympus by *Jupiter*. He established himself on the Capitol, being made welcome there by *Janus*. Saturn continued the work of civilisation begun by *Janus*, teaching men how to cultivate the soil, and the vine in particular. He is also sometimes regarded as a god of the underworld.

Saturninus: bishop of Uzali at some time before 391, mentioned by Augustine (xxii,8) in connexion with the miraculous cure of *Innocentius* (q.v.).

Scaevola: see *Mucius Scaevola*.

Scipio: Augustine makes reference to five *Scipios* in the *City of God*. He confuses two in i,30, 31, 32 and 33: (1) the *Scipio* who 'was unanimously chosen by the Senate to bring the sacred objects from Phrygia' was *Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica*, sent to Ostia in 204 BC along with the Roman matrons to receive the statue of *Cybele* which had been brought from *Pessinus* (Livy, 29,14). (2) The *Scipio* who advocated the preservation of Carthage and who, when consul in 155 BC, forbade the building of the theatre, is his son, *P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica Corculum*. (3) The *Scipio* who is the chief character in Cicero's dialogue *De republica* is *P. Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus Africanus Minor* (ca. 184–129 BC), general, statesman and patron of literature. He is referred to as 'another *Scipio*' by Augustine in para. 3 of Bk iii,21: in 147 BC, he assumed command in the third Punic War of 149–146 BC. (4) The *Scipio* referred to by Augustine at iii,21 as Rome's 'deliverer' is *P. Cornelius Scipio Africanus Major* (236–184 BC), hero of the second Punic War, who, forced into exile by political intrigues largely presided over by *Cato the Censor*, ended his life in exile. (5) The *Gnaeus Scipio* mentioned at ii,9 and 12 is probably *Gn. Cornelius Scipio Calvus*, consul in 222 BC. He was the uncle of *Scipio Africanus Major*.

Segetia: Roman goddess of cornfields; called *Segesta* by Pliny (18,2,8).

Seia: Roman goddess of seed corn according to Augustine (iv,8); of sowing according to Pliny (18,2,8; but cf. 36,46,163).

- Semele: one of the numerous mortal lovers of Zeus/Jupiter, and the mother by him of Dionysus/Liber.
- Semiramis: semi-legendary builder or restorer and queen of Babylon; wife of Ninus (1) and mother of Ninus (2), whose incestuous lover she is said to have been. Her evil reputation comes chiefly from Diodorus Siculus (2,7). See also Justinus, *Epit. hist. philipp. Pomp. Trog.*, ed. Ruehl and Seel, 1,2.
- Seneca: Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 BC to AD 65); Stoic philosopher; uncle of the poet Lucan. Having spent some years as tutor and adviser to the emperor Nero, he became involved in the conspiracy of Piso and was required to commit suicide. The fortitude of his end is famously described by Tacitus at *Annales*, 15.
- Sentia: a Roman goddess apparently inspiring wise opinions, *sententiae*; but nothing is known of her beyond what Augustine says at IV,11.
- Sentinus: see Vitumnus.
- Serapis: see Apis.
- Sertorius: Quintus Sertorius, Roman soldier of great distinction; one of the champions of the democratic party after the victory of Sulla. He was asked in 80 BC to lead the Lusitanians, and organised a Spanish army with which he defied the senatorial forces until 72 BC. He was assassinated by his lieutenant Perpenna.
- Servius Tullius: the sixth king of Rome (traditionally 578–535 BC). He is said to have been murdered as a result of a conspiracy between his younger daughter Tullia and the future Tarquinius Superbus (Livy, 1,48).
- Seven Sages: Traditionally, seven wise men of Greece who obtained great influence in their native cities as legislators and advisers. Ancient accounts of them vary somewhat. Plato, for example, omits Augustine's Periander of Corinth (xviii,25) and substitutes Myson of Chen (*Protag.*, 343A).
- Severus, bishop of Milevis or Mileum: a contemporary and close friend of Augustine, mentioned in several of his letters. See, e.g., *Epist.* 31,9; cf. *Enarrat. in Psalm.*, 45,1.
- Severus: Septimius Severus, Roman emperor from AD 193 to 211. He was initially well disposed to the Christians, but in 202 or 203 he issued an edict forbidding any pagan to become a member of the Jewish or Christian faith. This edict was followed by a very severe persecution in Africa and Syria.
- Sextus: Tarquinius Sextus; see Tarquin; Lucretia.
- Silvanus: Roman divinity of the woods, depicted as an old man having all the strength of youth. His habit of vexing new mothers is not known apart from Augustine's reference at VI,9. Of the three dei-

ties – Intercidona, Pilumnus and Deverra – said to defend mothers against his annoyances, only one, Pilumnus, is mentioned elsewhere (by Virgil at *Aen.*, 10,75ff).

Silvius: the fourth king of the Latins; the posthumous son of Aeneas by Lavinia, daughter of Latinus. According to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome, he ruled when Eli the priest was judge over Israel.

Simplicianus: a friend and teacher of St Ambrose and his successor (in 397) as bishop of Milan. He was an important factor in Augustine's conversion to Christianity, and Augustine's two books *De diversis quaestionibus* are addressed to him.

Socrates: Athenian philosopher (469–399 BC); friend and teacher of Plato, and traditionally the philosopher who changed the direction of philosophy from natural science to ethics (but see Archelaus). He was condemned to death by an Athenian people's jury in 399, probably because of his oligarchical sympathies but ostensibly for 'introducing new gods and corrupting the city's young'. He wrote nothing, and most of what we know of him comes from the dialogues of Plato in which he figures so prominently.

Sol: the sun as a deity, usually identified with the Greek Helios and often called Sol Indiges. In later times than those to which Augustine refers at IV,23, the Romans also worshipped an eastern sun-god whom they called Sol Invictus.

Solon: Athenian statesman and legislator (ca. 640–558 BC); he was named Archon in 594, and introduced his famous constitution. He was inspired by a sense of the solidarity of the various classes of the state and the need for fair treatment of all. He was also the first known Athenian poet, writing mainly on political themes; but only fragments of his poems remain.

Speusippus: Greek philosopher (ca. 407–339 BC); nephew of Plato and his successor as head of the Academy. His apparently numerous works have perished. Report of him vary. Some sources speak well of him; others describe him as ill tempered, avaricious and self-indulgent.

Sphinx: a monster who dwelt by the side of the road near Thebes, having a human head, the body of a lion and (in some versions) the wings of a bird. The creature used to propose riddles to travellers and tear them apart if they could not answer. Oedipus solved the riddle and, mortified, the Sphinx killed herself.

Spiniensis: a god associated with the removal of thorns from the fields; unknown apart from Augustine's mention at IV,21.

Spurius Maenius: a wealthy plebeian, he is said to have relieved a famine in 440–399 BC by distributing corn at his own expense. Sus-

- pected of aiming at tyranny, he was assassinated. See Quintus Servilius.
- Statilinus: a Roman god, also called Statanus, who apparently presides over the infant's first attempts to stand.
- Sterces or Stercutius: see Picus.
- Sthenelas or Stheneleus or Sthenelius: son of Crotopus and father of Gelanor; ninth king of the Argives. See Pausanias, 2,16,1; 2,19,2.
- Stimula: a Roman goddess associated with the Bacchic rites. Her grove (see Ovid, *Fast.*, 6,503) was the scene of orgies so frantic that they led to the suppression of the Bacchic rites by the Senate in 187 BC.
- Strato: Strato of Lampsachus (d. 269 BC); Aristotelian philosopher who succeeded Theophrastus as head of the Peripatetic School in *ca.* 288 BC. He presided over the school for eighteen years. He devoted himself chiefly to the study of natural science, and is for this reason often called 'Physicus'.
- Strenia or Strenua: a Roman goddess associated with vigour and good health. It was a New Year custom to send lucky twigs taken from her grove on the Via Sacra (Varro, *De ling. Lat.*, 5,47).
- Subigus: Roman matrimonial god, unknown apart from Augustine's reference to him at VI,9. He is one of several deities who seem to preside over the marriage bed.
- Sulla: Lucius Cornelius Sulla (138–78 BC); Roman general and leader of the aristocratic conservative party in the Civil War against Marius, under whom he had previously served. His most notable military success was against Mithridates of Pontus. After defeating Marius he was elected dictator and took the name Felix ('Lucky'). He made great changes to the constitution and jury system in order to strengthen the power of the Senate and create an effective administration. His notorious arrogance and cruelty, of which Augustine makes so much, are recorded in Plutarch's account of his life.
- Summanus: a Roman god associated, and perhaps originally synonymous, with Jupiter. The god of the nocturnal heavens; the god who sends nocturnal thunderbolts. A statue of Summanus on the Capitol was damaged by lightning in 278 BC, and this was taken to be a sign of Jupiter's displeasure at having to share the Capitol with him.
- Symmachus: translator of the Old Testament into idiomatic Greek, in contrast to the extreme and stilted literalness of the translation of Aquila. His dates are not known, but he seems to have flourished *ca.* AD 200.
- Tantalus: a king of Phrygia, son of Jupiter and father of Pelops and Niobe. His father admitted him to the feasts of the gods; but he was punished for disclosing their secrets by having to stand eternally in

- water which receded whenever he tried to drink it, and within reach of fruit which withdrew whenever he tried to pluck it. Augustine's reference (xviii,13) to Ganymede in relation to Tantalus seems to be due to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome.
- Tantanes: king of the Assyrians at the time of the destruction of Troy and the flight of Aeneas to Italy.
- Tarquin: there were two Tarquin kings of Rome: (1) Tarquinius Priscus, traditionally the fifth king (616–579 BC), and (2) Tarquinius Superbus, the last king, who reigned from *ca.* 534 to 510 BC. Tarquinius Priscus was believed to have brought Etruscan craftsmen to Rome, built, or begun to build, the temples on the Capitol, and constructed the Great Sewer, the *Cloaca Maxima*. The rape of Lucretia by Tarquinius Sextus, son of Tarquinius Superbus, led to the expulsion of the kings from Rome.
- Tarutius: a wealthy Etruscan who married Acca Larentia (see Larentina) and, when he died, left her his large estates near Rome, which she in turn bequeathed to the Roman people.
- Tellumo; Tellus: a goddess personifying the productive power of the earth; Terra is a synonym for her. Tellumo is a god personifying the productive power of the earth in its male aspect. At vii,24, paraphrasing Varro, Augustine says that Tellus, Cybele, Ops and Proserpine are all synonymous.
- Telxion: according to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome, he was king of the Sicyonians at the time of the birth of Isaac. Pausanias (2,5,5) calls him Thelxion.
- Terence: Publius Terentius Afer (*ca.* 185–160 BC); Roman comic dramatist of north African origin. He came to Rome as a slave and was freed and patronised by Scipio Africanus Minor and other members of his circle. Author of six comedies, all of them adapted from Greek models.
- Terentianus: Terentianus Maurus; Roman grammarian and poet of the late second century AD. His *De litteris, syllabis et metris Horatii* is written entirely in verse.
- Terminus: the Roman god of boundary stones originally, and then, by extension, of frontiers. Believed to be the original inhabitant of the Capitol, his statue remained inside the temple of Jupiter when it was built.
- Terra: see Tellus.
- Tertullian: Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus (*ca.* AD 160–240); a Roman lawyer converted to Christianity *ca.* 195. Thereafter, he devoted his considerable literary and forensic gifts to the exposition and defence of Christianity. He is noted for the extreme rigour of his theological and moral views. Thirty-one of his works survive.

- Thales: philosopher and natural scientist of the late seventh century BC. He considered water to be the material basis of the world. He is also said to have predicted within a year the solar eclipse of 585 BC. He travelled in Egypt, studied the flooding of the Nile, and discovered a method of calculating the height of the pyramids. See also Seven Sages.
- Theodosius: Theodosius I, Christian Roman emperor, famed for his religious submission to St Ambrose (see *City of God*, v,26). He was appointed emperor in the East by Gratian in 379. When the usurper Maximus killed Gratian in 383, Theodosius initially recognised him; but when Maximus expelled Gratian's brother Valentinian II from Italy, Theodosius marched against Maximus, defeated and killed him, and restored Valentinian.
- Theodotion: also called Theodotus (fl. ca. AD 180); he seems to have produced a revised version of the Septuagint, not, as Augustine suggests at xviii,43, a translation of the Old Testament.
- Thetis: see Discord; Achilles.
- Thuriacus: the seventh king of the Sicyonians, ruling at the time of the death of Abraham. The *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome calls him Thurimachus.
- Tiberinus: the god of the River Tiber, greatly venerated by the Romans because of the major importance of the river to the welfare of the state (Cicero, *De nat. deor.*, 3,20,52; Ovid., *Fast.*, 6,237).
- Tiberius: adopted son of Augustus Caesar and Roman emperor from AD 14 to 37; noted (according to Tacitus, a very hostile source) for his increasing viciousness, hypocrisy and deception.
- Titus Latinus: the story which Augustine relates at iv,26 and viii,13 is all that is known of Titus Latinus. It comes from Cicero, *De divin.*, 1,26,55, Livy 2,36 and Valerius Maximus, 1,7,4.
- Titus Tatius: king who led the Sabines in their war against the Romans after the rape of the Sabine women. After the two peoples were reconciled, he ruled jointly with Romulus for five years. Augustine says that Romulus killed him (iii,13); but cf. Livy, 1,13f.
- Torquatus: Titus Manlius Imperiosus Torquatus; Roman general and consul, who, in the Latin war of 340 BC, executed his own son for disobedience (Livy, 7,7).
- Trajan: Roman emperor from AD 98 to 118; noted for his benevolence and justice. His correspondence with the younger Pliny survives, in which he instructs Pliny (then governor of Bithynia) that Christians, if brought before the tribunals and convicted, should be punished, but that they should not be sought out (Pliny, *Epist.* 10,97f). Contrary to what Augustine says at xviii,52, Trajan was not a persecutor of the Christians to any significant extent.

- Triopas: seventh king of the Argives, ruling (according to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome) at the time of the Exodus from Egypt.
- Triptolemus: regarded by the Greeks as the inventor of agriculture and hence as the founder of civilisation. He was the pupil of Ceres who took him in her chariot, drawn by winged dragons, into all the countries of the earth, bestowing valuable grains and the knowledge of agriculture upon mankind. See Pausanias, 8,18,2; cf. Ovid, *Met.*, 5,64,2ff.
- Tritonia: see Minerva.
- Trogus Pompeius: Roman historian; a contemporary of Livy; author of the *Historiae philippicae* in forty-four books, a universal history extending from the time of Ninus down to his own day.
- Tullus Hostilius: traditionally the third king of Rome (673–642 BC), who captured and destroyed the city of Alba Longa. See Horatii.
- Tutilina: a Roman goddess apparently giving protection specifically to harvested corn. Tertullian gives her name as Tutulina (*De spect.*, 8,3).
- Tutunus: see Priapus.
- Tyndarus: Lacedaemonian hero; the husband of Leda and hence the stepfather of Helen and the Dioscuri (i.e. Castor and Pollux).
- Ulysses: Ulysses is the Latin name of Odysseus, one of the Greek chieftains portrayed in the *Iliad*, and the hero of the *Odyssey*.
- Uranus: Greek God personifying heaven; husband of Gaia (= Earth), who bore him many children. She tired of his sexual brutality and, at her request, he was castrated by his son Saturn/Kronos.
- Valens: eastern Roman emperor, 364–378; brother and colleague of Valentinian I; declared himself an Arian shortly after becoming emperor, and persecuted the Catholic Church. Defeated and killed by the Visigoths at the battle of Adrianople in 378.
- Valentinian: (1) the Valentinian mentioned at XVIII,52 is Valentinian I, Roman emperor from 363 to 375. Augustine says that, before he became emperor, he was 'deprived of his military command' for professing Christianity. According to Sozomen (*Hist. eccl.*, 6,6; and cf. Orosius, 7,32) he was banished to Melitina in Armenia. (2) The Valentinian mentioned at V,26 is Valentinian II, son of Valentinian I; Roman emperor from 375 to 392 (he was a small child at the time of his election); brother of Gratian; driven out of Italy by Maximus, but restored by Theodosius I. Died – probably assassinated – at Vienne in 392.
- Valerian: Licinius Valerianus, Roman emperor from 253 to 260. He was initially favourable to Christianity, but initiated a savage persecution in 257, allegedly at the instigation of an Egyptian sorcerer

- called Macranus. See Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*, 7,10ff. This persecution was directed chiefly against the clergy and wealthy laymen.
- Valerius Soranus: Quintus Valerius Soranus (fl. 100 BC); Roman author praised by Cicero for his great learning (*De orat.*, 3,11,43). None of his works survive.
- Valerius: see Publius Valerius.
- Vallonia: see Collatina.
- Varro: Marcus Terentius Varro (116–27 BC); Roman poet, satirist, antiquarian, jurist, geographer, grammarian and man of prodigious learning. Of his seventy-four works in over six hundred volumes, nothing survives except his *De re rustica*, six out of the twenty-five books of his *De lingua Latina* and some six hundred lines of his *Satirae menippeae*. Augustine refers very frequently to his *Antiquitatum rerum humanarum et divinarum libri XLI*, which was apparently divided into twenty-five books on ‘Things Human’ and sixteen on ‘Things Divine’. Augustine also refers to his *De cultu deorum*, *De gente populi Romani*, and *De philosophia*.
- Vaticanus: a Roman god who presides over the Vatican hill or region. According to Augustine (iv,8), he ‘presides over the wails of infants’; but this seems to depend on an unlikely derivation from *vagitus*. Augustine apparently takes his references (see also iv,11) from Varro (see Aulus Gellius, *Noct. Att.*, 16,17).
- Venilia: see Neptune.
- Venus: in Roman religion, originally the goddess of gardens, but later assimilated to the Greek Aphrodite, goddess of love. In deriving her name from *vis* at vi,9, Augustine follows Varro, *De ling. Lat.*, 62f.
- Vespasii: Titus Flavius Vespasianus, Roman emperor AD 69–79, and his son of the same name, Roman emperor AD 79–81: emperors noted for moderation, clemency and generosity.
- Vesta: the goddess of the blazing hearth, whose flame was tended in her temple near the forum by the Vestals, of which there were originally four, and later six. Vestals found guilty of unchastity were buried alive in an underground chamber in a place called the *Campus sceleratus* (Plutarch, *Numa*; Pliny, *Epist.* 4,11).
- Victory; Victoria: the Roman equivalent of the Greek goddess Nike. Victory had a temple on the Palatine, but her most sacred symbol was the altar of Victory in the Senate House, removed after a bitter struggle by the emperor Gratian in AD 382.
- Virgil: Publius Vergilius Maro (70–19 BC); Roman poet and author of the *Eclogues*, *Georgics* and *Aeneid*. Quoted or cited by Augustine over seventy times. Virgil’s fourth Eclogue was widely regarded by the Fathers and in the Middle Ages as a prophecy of Christ: see *City of God*, x,27.

- Virginensis: a Roman goddess evidently presiding over the successful loss of the bride's virginity. Possibly an epithet of Fortuna. See also Pertunda.
- Virtue; Virtus: Roman goddess personifying the manly virtues of resolution, valour, constancy, and so on.
- Vitumnus and Sentinus: Vitumnus and Sentinus are identified by both Augustine and Tertullian (*Ad nat.*, 2,15) as the gods by whom life and sensation respectively are bestowed upon the body. As Augustine remarks, it is curious that gods with such important functions should be so minor and obscure.
- Volumnus and Volumna: Roman divinities apparently presiding over right desire; but we know nothing of them apart from Augustine's reference at IV,21.
- Volupia: a Roman goddess personifying pleasure. Her shrine is mentioned by Varro at *De ling. Lat.*, 5,164.
- Volutina: a goddess apparently presiding over the corn when the ears are still enfolded in the upper leaves. The name does not occur outside the *City of God*.
- Vulcan: an early Roman deity, assimilated to the Greek Hephaestus, god of fire.
- Xanthus: called Asterius by Diodorus Siculus (4,60); king of Crete and husband of Europa.
- Xenocrates: Xenocrates of Chalcedon (d. 314 BC); Greek philosopher; he succeeded Speusippus (in 339 BC) as head of the Academy.
- Xenophanes of Colophon: Greek philosopher (ca. 570-480 BC); possibly a pupil of Anaximander; he held that knowledge of the gods is impossible, and opposed all anthropomorphic theories of the gods. Only fragments of his writings survive, including the remark that, 'The gods of the Ethiopians have dark skin and flat noses; those of the Thracians have fair hair and blue eyes; if oxen could paint, their gods would be oxen.'
- Xerxes, also called Baleus: the sixth king of Assyria, ruling (according to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius/Jerome) at the time of Abraham's death.
- Zeno: Zeno of Citium (335-263 BC); Greek philosopher; founder of Stoicism. In ethics, he taught that the only real good is virtue and the only real evil moral weakness. All else, including pain, poverty and death, is indifferent.
- Zoroaster: also called Zarathustra; a historical religious teacher, probably of the sixth century BC, who lived in Iran or Bactria. His name has become associated with many legends. He was the founder of the dualistic religion and ethical system named after him which was to reach the height of its influence in Persia under the Sassanids (AD 211-640). It was largely, though not entirely, obliterated by Islam.

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